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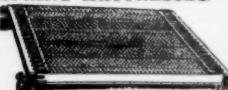
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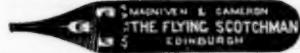
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MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER, 1887.

AMIEL.

It is somewhat late to speak of Amiel, but I was late in reading him. Goethe says that in seasons of cholera one should read no books but such as are tonic, and certainly in the season of old age this precaution is as salutary as in seasons of cholera. From what I heard I could clearly make out that Amiel's Journal was not a tonic book : the extracts from it which here and there I fell in with did not much please me ; and for a good while I left the book unread.

But what M. Edmond Scherer writes I do not easily resist reading, and I found that M. Scherer had prefixed to Amiel's Journal a long and important introduction. This I read ; and was not less charmed by the *mitis sapientia*, the understanding kindness and tenderness, with which the character of Amiel himself, whom M. Scherer had known in youth, was handled, than interested by the criticism on the Journal. Then I read Mrs. Humphry Ward's interesting notice, and then—for all biography is attractive, and of Amiel's life and circumstances I had by this time become desirous of knowing more—the "Etude Biographique" of Mademoiselle Berthe Vadier.

Of Amiel's cultivation, refinement, and high feeling, of his singular graces of spirit and character, there could be no doubt. But the specimens of his work given by his critics left me hesitating. A poetess herself, Mademoiselle Berthe Vadier is much occupied with Amiel's poetry, and quotes

it abundantly. Even Victor Hugo's poetry leaves me cold, I am so unhappy as not to be able to admire "Olympio ;" what am I to say, then, to Amiel's

"Journée
Illuminée,
Riant soleil d'avril,
En quel songe
Se plonge
Mon cœur, et que veut-il ?"

But M. Scherer and other critics, who do not require us to admire Amiel's poetry, maintain that in his Journal he has left "a book which will not die," a book describing a malady of which "the secret is sublime and the expression wonderful ;" a marvel of "speculative intuition," a "psychological experience of the utmost value." M. Scherer and Mrs. Humphry Ward give Amiel's Journal very decidedly the preference over the letters of an old friend of mine, Obermann. The quotations made from Amiel's Journal by his critics failed, I say, to enable me quite to understand this high praise. But I remember the time when a new publication by George Sand or by Sainte-Beuve was an event bringing to me a shock of pleasure, and a French book capable of renewing that sensation is seldom produced now. If Amiel's Journal was of the high quality alleged, what a pleasure to make acquaintance with it, what a loss to miss it ! In spite, therefore, of the unfitness of old age to bear atonic influences, I at last read Amiel's

Journal,—read it carefully through. Tonic it is not ; but it is to be read with profit, and shows, moreover, powers of great force and value, though not quite, I am inclined to think, in the exact line which his critics with one consent indicate.

In speaking of Amiel at present, after so much has been written about him, I may assume that the main outlines of his life are known to my readers : that they know him to have been born in 1821 and to have died in 1881, to have passed the three or four best years of his youth at the University of Berlin, and the remainder of his life mostly at Geneva, as a professor, first of aesthetics, afterwards of philosophy. They know that his publications and lectures, during his lifetime, disappointed his friends, who expected much from his acquirements, talents, and vivacity ; and that his fame rests upon two volumes of extracts from many thousand pages of a private journal, "Journal Intime," extending over more than thirty years, from 1848 to 1881, which he left behind him at his death. This Journal explains his sterility ; and displays in explaining it, say his critics, such sincerity, with such gifts of expression and eloquence, of profound analysis and speculative intuition, as to make it most surely "one of those books which will not die."

The sincerity is unquestionable. As to the gifts of eloquence and expression, what are we to say ? M. Scherer speaks of an "ever new eloquence" pouring itself in the pages of the Journal : M. Paul Bourget, of "marvellous pages" where the feeling for nature finds an expression worthy of Shelley or Wordsworth : Mrs. Humphry Ward, of "magic of style," of "glow and splendour of expression," of the "poet and artist" who fascinates us in Amiel's prose. I cannot quite agree. Obermann has been mentioned : it seems to me that we have only to place a passage from Séancour beside a passage from Amiel, to perceive the difference between a feeling for

nature which gives magic to style and one which does not. Here and throughout I am to use as far as possible Mrs. Humphry Ward's translation, at once spirited and faithful, of Amiel's Journal. I will take a passage where Amiel has evidently some reminiscence of Séancour (whose work he knew well), is inspired by Séancour—a passage which has been extolled by M. Paul Bourget.

" Shall I ever enjoy again those marvellous reveries of past days,—as for instance, once, when I was still quite a youth in the early dawn sitting amongst the ruins of the castle of Faucigny ; another time in the mountains above Lancy, under the midday sun, lying under tree and visited by three butterflies ; and again another night on the sandy shore of the North Sea, stretched full length upon the beach, my eyes wandering over the Milky Way ! Will they ever return to me, those grandiose, immortal, cosmogonic dreams in which one seems to carry the world in one's breast, to touch the stars, to possess the infinite ? Divine moments, hours of ecstasy, when thought flies from world to world, penetrates the great enigma, breathes with a respiration large, tranquil and profound like that of the ocean, and hovers serene and boundless like the blue heaven ! Visits from the Muse Urania, who traces around the foreheads of those she loves the phosphorescent nimbus of contemplative power, and who pours into their hearts the tranquil intoxication, if not the authority of genius,—moments of irresistible intuition in which a man feels himself great as the universe and calm like God ! . . . What hours, what memories ! "

And now for Obermann's turn, Obermann by the Lake of Bienne.

" My path lay beside the green waters of the Thiele. Feeling inclined to muse, and finding the night so warm that there was no hardship in being all night out of doors, I took the road to Saint Blaise. I descended a steep bank, and got upon the shore of the lake where its ripple came up and expired. The air was calm ; everyone was at rest ; I remained there for hours. Towards morning, the moon shed over the earth and waters the ineffable melancholy of her last gleams. Nature seems unspeakably grand, when, plunged in a long reverie, one hears the rippling of the waters upon a solitary strand, in the calm of a night still enkindled and luminous with the setting moon.

" Sensibility beyond utterance, charm and torment of our vain years ; vast consciousness of a nature everywhere greater than we

are, and everywhere impenetrable ; all-embracing passion, ripened wisdom, delicious self-abandonment—everything that a mortal heart can contain of life-weariness and yearning, I felt it all, I experienced it all, in this memorable night. I have made a grave step towards the age of decline, I have swallowed up ten years of life at once. Happy the simple, whose heart is always young !

No translation can render adequately the cadence of diction, the “dying fall” of reveries like those of Séancour or Rousseau. But even in a translation we must surely perceive that the magic of style is with Séancour’s feeling for nature, not Amiel’s ; and in the original this is far more manifest still.

Magic of style is creative : its possessor himself creates, and he inspires and enables his reader in some sort to create after him. And creation gives the sense of life and joy ; hence its extraordinary value. But eloquence may exist without magic of style, and this eloquence, accompanying thoughts of rare worth and depth, may heighten their effect greatly. And M. Scherer says that Amiel’s speculative philosophy is “on a far other scale of vastness” than Séancour’s, and therefore he gives the preference to the eloquence of Amiel, which clothes and conveys this vaster philosophy. Amiel was no doubt greatly Séancour’s superior in culture and instruction generally ; in philosophical reading and what is called philosophical thought he was immensely his superior. My sense for philosophy, I know, is as far from satisfying Mr. Frederic Harrison as my sense for Hugo’s poetry is from satisfying Mr. Swinburne. But I am too old to change and too hardened to hide what I think ; and when I am presented with philosophical speculations and told that they are “on a high scale of vastness,” I persist in looking closely at them and in honestly asking myself what I find to be their positive value. And we get from Amiel’s powers of “speculative intuition” things like this :

“Created spirits in the accomplishment of their destinies tend, so to speak, to form con-

stellations and milky ways within the empyrean of the divinity ; in becoming gods, they surround the throne of the sovereign with a sparkling court.”

Or this :

“Is not mind the universal virtuality, the universe latent ? If so, its zero would be the germ of the infinite, which is expressed mathematically by the double zero (00).”

Or, to let our philosopher develop himself at more length, let us take this return to the zero, which Mrs. Humphry Ward prefers here to render by *nothingness* :

“This psychological reinvolution is an anticipation of death ; it represents the life beyond the grave, the return to Scheol, the soul fading into the world of ghosts or descending into the region of *Die Mitter* ; it implies the simplification of the individual who, allowing all the accidents of personality to evaporate, exists henceforward only in the invisible state, the state of point, of potentiality, of pregnant nothingness. Is not this the true definition of mind ? is not mind, dissociated from space and time, just this ? Its development, past or future, is contained in it just as a curve is contained in its algebraical formula. This nothing is an all. This *punctum* without dimensions is a *punctum saliens*.”

French critics throw up their hands in dismay at the violence which the Germanised Amiel, propounding his speculative philosophy, often does to the French language. My objection is rather that such speculative philosophy as that of which I have been quoting specimens has no value, is perfectly futile. And Amiel’s Journal contains far too much of it.

What is futile we may throw aside ; but when Amiel tells us of his “protean nature essentially metamorphosable, polarisable, and virtual,” when he tells us of his longing for “totality,” we must listen, although these phrases may in France, as M. Paul Bourget says, “raise a shudder in a humanist trained on Livy and Pascal.” But these phrases stood for ideas which did practically rule, in a great degree, Amiel’s life, which he often develops not only with great subtlety, but also with force, clearness, and eloquence, making it both easy and interesting to us to follow him. But still, when we

have the ideas present before us, I shall ask, what is their value, what does Amiel obtain in them for the service of either himself or other people?

Let us take first what, adopting his own phrase, we may call his "bendazzlement with the infinite," his thirst for "totality." *Omnis determinatio est negatio.* Amiel has the gift and the bent for making his soul "the capacity for all form, not a soul but the soul." He finds it easier and more natural "to be man than a man." His permanent instinct is to be "a subtle and fugitive spirit which no base can absorb or fix entirely." It costs him an effort to affirm his own personality : "the infinite draws me to it, the *Henosis* of Plotinus intoxicates me like a philtre."

It intoxicates him until the thought of absorption and extinction, the *Nirvana* of Buddhism, becomes his thought of refuge.

"The individual life is a nothing ignorant of itself, and as soon as this nothing knows itself individual life is abolished in principle. For as soon as the illusion vanishes, Nothingness resumes its eternal sway, the suffering of life is over, error has disappeared, time and form have for this enfranchised individuality ceased to be; the coloured air-bubble has burst in the infinite space, and the misery of thought has sunk to rest in the changeless repose of all-embracing Nothing."

With this bedazement with the infinite and this drift towards Buddhism comes the impatience with all production, with even poetry and art themselves, because of their necessary limits and imperfection.

"Composition demands a concentration, decision, and pliancy which I no longer possess. I cannot fuse together materials and ideas. If we are to give anything a form we must, so to speak, be the tyrants of it. We must treat our subject brutally and not be always trembling lest we should be doing it a wrong. We must be able to transmute and absorb it into our own substance. This sort of confident effrontery is beyond me; my whole nature tends to that impersonality which respects and subordinates itself to the object; it is love of truth which holds me back from concluding and deciding."

The desire for the all, the impatience with what is partial and limited, the

fascination of the infinite, are the topics of page after page in the Journal. It is a prosaic mind which has never been in contact with ideas of this sort, never felt their charm. They lend themselves well to poetry, but what are we to say of their value as ideas to be lived with, dilated on, made the governing ideas of life? Except for use in passing, and with the power to dismiss them again, they are unprofitable. Shelley's

"Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of eternity
Until death tramples it to fragments"

has value as a splendid image nobly introduced in a beautiful and impassioned poem. But Amiel's "coloured air-bubble," as a positive piece of "speculative intuition," has no value whatever. Nay, the thoughts which have positive truth and value, the thoughts to be lived with and dwelt upon, the thoughts which are a real acquisition for our minds, are precisely thoughts which counteract the "vague aspiration and indeterminate desire" possessing Amiel and filling his Journal: they are thoughts insisting on the need of limit, the feasibility of performance. Goethe says admirably :

"Wer grosses will muss sich zusammenraffen:
In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der
Meister."

"He who will do great things must pull himself together: it is in working within limits that the master comes out." Buffon says not less admirably :

"Tout sujet est un; et quelque vaste qu'il soit, il peut être renfermé dans un seul discours."

"Every subject is one, and however vast it may be is capable of being contained in a single discourse." The ideas to live with, the ideas of sterling value to us, are, I repeat, ideas of this kind: ideas staunchly counteracting and reducing the power of the infinite and indeterminate, not paralysing us with it.

And indeed we have not to go

beyond Amiel himself for proof of this. Amiel was paralysed by living in these ideas of "vague aspiration and indeterminate desire," of "confounding his personal life in the general life," by feeding on these ideas, treating them as august and precious, and filling hundreds of pages of *Journal* with them. He was paralysed by it, he became impotent and miserable. And he knew it, and tells us of it himself with a power of analysis and with a sad eloquence which to me are much more interesting and valuable than his philosophy of Maïa and the Great Wheel. "By your natural tendency," he says to himself, "you arrive at disgust with life, despair, pessimism." And again: "Melancholy outlook on all sides. Disgust with myself." And again: "I cannot deceive myself as to the fate in store for me: increasing isolation, inward disappointment, enduring regrets, a melancholy neither to be consoled nor confessed, a mournful old age, a slow agony, a death in the desert." And all this misery by his own fault, his own mistakes. "To live is to conquer incessantly; one must have the courage to be happy. I turn in a vicious circle; I have never had clear sight of my true vocation."

I cannot therefore fall in with that particular line of admiration which critics, praising Amiel's *Journal*, have commonly followed. I cannot join in celebrating his prodigies of speculative intuition, the glow and splendour of his beatific vision of absolute knowledge, the marvellous pages in which his deep and vast philosophic thought is laid bare, the secret of his sublime malady is expressed. I hesitate to admit that all this part of the *Journal* has even a very profound psychological interest: its interest is rather pathological. In reading it we are not so much pursuing a study of psychology as a study of morbid pathology.

But the *Journal* reveals a side in Amiel which his critics, so far as I

have seen, have hardly noticed, a side of real power, originality, and value. He says himself that he never had clear sight of his true vocation: well, his true vocation, it seems to me, was that of a literary critic. Here he is admirable: M. Scherer was a true friend when he offered to introduce him to an editor, and suggested an article on Uhland. There is hardly a literary criticism in these two volumes which is not masterly, and which does not make one desire more of the same kind. And not Amiel's literary criticism only, but his criticism of society, politics, national character, religion, is in general well-informed, just, and penetrating in an eminent degree. Any one single page of this criticism is worth, in my opinion, a hundred of Amiel's pages about the Infinite Illusion and the Great Wheel. It is to this side in Amiel that I desire now to draw attention. I would have abstained from writing about him if I had only to disparage and to find fault, only to say that he had been overpraised, and that his dealings with Maïa seemed to me profitable neither for himself nor for others.

Let me first take Amiel as a critic of literature, and of the literature which he naturally knew best, French literature. Hear him as critic on that best of critics, Sainte-Beuve, of whose death (1869) he had just heard.

"The fact is, Sainte-Beuve leaves a greater void behind him than either Béranger or Lamartine; their greatness was already distant, historical; he was still helping us to think. The true critic supplies all the world with a basis. He represents the public judgment, that is to say, the public reason, the touchstone, the scales, the crucible, which tests the value of each man and the merit of each work. Infallibility of judgment is perhaps rarer than anything else, so fine a balance of qualities does it demand—qualities both natural and acquired, qualities of both mind and heart. What years of labour, what study and comparison, are needed to bring the critical judgment to maturity! Like Plato's sage, it is only at fifty that the critic is risen to the true height of his literary priesthood, or, to put it less pompously, of his social function. Not till then has he compassed all modes of being, and made every shade of appreciation his own. And Sainte-Beuve joined to this

infinitely refined culture a prodigious memory and an incredible multitude of facts and anecdotes stored up for the service of his thought."

The criticism is so sound, so admirably put, and so charming, that one wishes Sainte-Beuve could have read it himself.

Try Amiel next on the touchstone afforded by that "half genius, half charlatan," Victor Hugo.

"I have been again looking through Victor Hugo's 'Paris' (1867). For ten years event after event has given the lie to the prophet, but the confidence of the prophet in his own imaginings is not therefore a whit diminished. Humility and common sense are only fit for Lilliputians. Victor Hugo superbly ignores everything which he has not foreseen. He does not know that pride limits the mind, and that a limitless pride is a littleness of soul. If he could but learn to rank himself with other men and France with other nations, he would see things more truly, and would not fall into his insane exaggerations, his extravagant oracles. But proportion and justness his chords will never know. He is vowed to the Titanic; his gold is always mixed with lead, his insight with childishness, his reason with madness. He cannot be simple; like the blaze of a house on fire, his light is blinding. In short, he astonishes but provokes, he stirs but annoys. His note is always half or two-thirds false, and that is why he perpetually makes us feel uncomfortable. The great poet in him cannot get clear of the charlatan. A few pricks of Voltaire's irony would have made the inflation of this genius collapse, and rendered him stronger by rendering him saner. It is a public misfortune that the most powerful poet of France should not have better understood his rôle, and that, unlike the Hebrew prophets who chastised because they loved, he flatters his fellow-citizens from system and from pride. France is the world, Paris is France, Hugo is Paris. Bow down and worship, ye nations!"

Finally, we will hear Amiel on a consummate and supreme French classic, as perfect as Hugo is flawed, *La Fontaine*.

"Went through my *La Fontaine* yesterday, and remarked his omissions. . . . He has not an echo of chivalry haunting him. His French history dates from Louis XIV. His geography extends in reality but a few square miles, and reaches neither the Rhine nor the Loire, neither the mountains nor the sea. He never invents his subjects, but indolently takes them ready-made from elsewhere. But with all this, what an adorable writer, what a painter, what an observer, what

a master of the comic and the satirical, what a teller of a story! I am never tired of him, though I know half his fables by heart. In the matter of vocabulary, turns of expression, tones, idioms, his language is perhaps the richest of the great period, for it combines skilfully the archaic with the classical, the Gaulish element with what is French. Variety, finesse, sly fun, sensibility, rapidity, conciseness, suavity, grace, gaiety—when necessary, nobleness, seriousness, grandeur—you find everything in our fabulist. And the happy epithets, and the telling proverbs, and the sketches dashed off, and the unexpected audacities, and the point driven well home! One cannot say what he has not, so many diverse aptitudes he has.

"Compare his 'Woodcutter and Death' with Boileau's, and you can measure the prodigious difference between the artist and the critic who wanted to teach him better. *La Fontaine* brings visibly before you the poor peasant under the monarchy, Boileau but exhibits a drudge sweating under his load. The first is a historic witness, the second a school-versifier. *La Fontaine* enables you to reconstruct the whole society of his age; the pleasant old soul from Champagne, with his animals, turns out to be the one and only Homer of France.

"His weak side is his epicureanism, with its tinge of grossness. This, no doubt, was what made Lamartine dislike him. The religious string is wanting to his lyre, he has nothing which shows him to have known either Christianity or the high tragedies of the soul. Kind Nature is his goddess, Horace his prophet, and Montaigne his gospel. In other words, his horizon is that of the Renascence. This islet of paganism in the midst of a Catholic society is very curious; the paganism is perfectly simple and frank."

These are but notes, jottings in his Journal, and Amiel passed from them to broodings over the infinite, and personality, and totality. Probably the literary criticism which he did so well, and for which he shows a true vocation, gave him nevertheless but little pleasure because he did it thus fragmentarily and by fits and starts. To do it thoroughly, to make his fragments into wholes, to fit them for coming before the public, composition with its toils and limits was necessary. Toils and limits composition indeed has; yet all composition is a kind of creation, creation gives, as I have already said, pleasure, and, when successful and sustained, more than pleasure, joy. Amiel, had he tried the

experiment with literary criticism, where lay his true vocation, would have found it so. Sainte-Beuve, whom he so much admires, would have been the most miserable of men if his production had been but a volume or two of middling poems and a journal. But Sainte-Beuve's motto, as Amiel himself notices, was that of the Emperor Severus : *Laboremus*. "Work," Sainte-Beuve confesses to a friend, "is my sore burden, but it is also my great resource. I eat my heart out when I am not up to the neck in work ; there you have the secret of the life I lead." If M. Scherer's introduction to the *Revue Germanique* could but have been used, if Amiel could but have written the article on Uhland and followed it up by plenty of articles move !

I have quoted largely from Amiel's literary criticism, because this side of him has, so far as I have observed, received so little attention, and yet deserves attention so eminently. But his more general criticism, too, shows, as I have said, the same high qualities as his criticism of authors and books. I must quote one or two of his aphorisms. *L'esprit sert bien à tout, mais ne suffit à rien* : "Wits are of use for everything, sufficient for nothing." *Une société vit de sa foi et se développe par la science* : "A society lives on its faith and develops itself by science." *L'État libéral est irréalisable avec une religion antilibérale, et presque irréalisable avec l'absence de religion* : "Liberal communities are impossible with an anti-liberal religion, and almost impossible with the absence of religion." But epigrammatic sentences of this sort are perhaps not so very difficult to produce, in French at any rate. Let us take Amiel when he has room and verve enough to show what he can really say which is important about society, religion, national life and character. We have seen what an influence his years passed in Germany had upon him : we have seen how severely he judges Victor Hugo's faults : the faults of the French nation

at large he judges with a like severity. But what a fine and just perception does the following passage show of the deficiencies of Germany, the advantage which the western nations have in their more finished civilisation.

"It is in the novel that the average vulgarity of German society, and its inferiority to the societies of France and England are most clearly visible. The notion of a thing's *jarring on the taste* is wanting to German aesthetics. Their elegance knows nothing of grace ; they have no sense of the enormous distance between distinction (gentlemanly, ladylike) and their stiff *Vornehmlichkeit*. Their imagination lacks style, training, education, and knowledge of the world ; it is stamped with an ill-bred air even in its Sunday clothes. The race is practical and intelligent, but common and ill-mannered. Ease, amiability, manners, wit, animation, dignity, charm, are qualities which belong to others.

"Will that inner freedom of soul, that profound harmony of all the faculties, which I have so often observed among the best Germans, ever come to the surface ? Will the conquerors of to-day ever civilise their forms of life ? It is by their future novels that we shall be able to judge. As soon as the German novel can give us quite good society, the Germans will be in the raw stage no longer."

And this pupil of Berlin, this devourer of German books, this victim, say the French critics, to the contagion of German style, after three hours, one day, of a *Geschichte der Ästhetik in Deutschland*, breaks out :

"Learning and even thought are not everything. A little *esprit*, point, vivacity, imagination, grace, would do no harm. Do these pedantic books leave a single image or sentence, a single striking or new fact, in the memory when one lays them down ? No, nothing but fatigue and confusion. Oh, for clearness, terseness, brevity ! Diderot, Voltaire, or even Galliani ! A short article by Sainte-Beuve, Scherer, Renan, Victor Cherbuliez, gives one more pleasure, and makes one ponder and reflect more, than a thousand of these German pages crammed to the margin and showing the work itself rather than its result. The Germans heap the faggots for the pile, the French bring the fire. Spare me your lucubrations, give me facts or ideas. Keep your vats, your must, your dregs, to yourselves ; I want wine fully made, wine which will sparkle in the glass and kindle my spirits instead of oppressing them."

Amiel may have been led away *deteriora sequi* : he may have Germanised until he has become capable

of the verb *dépersonnaliser* and the noun *réimplication*; but after all, his heart is in the right place: *videt meliora probatque*. He remains at bottom the man who said: *Le livre serait mon ambition*. He adds, to be sure, that it would be *son ambition*, "if ambition were not vanity, and vanity of vanities."

Yet this disenchanted brooder, "full of a tranquil disgust at the futility of our ambitions, the void of our existence," bedazzled with the infinite, can observe the world and society with consummate keenness and shrewdness, and at the same time with a delicacy which to the man of the world is in general wanting. Is it possible to analyse *le grand monde*, high society, as the Old World knows it and America knows it not, more acutely than Amiel does in what follows?

"In society people are expected to behave as if they lived on ambrosia and concerned themselves with no interests but such as are noble. Care, need, passion, do not exist. All realism is suppressed as brutal. In a word, what is called *le grand monde* gives itself for the moment the flattering illusion that it is moving in an ethereal atmosphere and breathing the air of the gods. For this reason all vehemence, any cry of nature, all real suffering, all heedless familiarity, any genuine sign of passion, are startling and distasteful in this delicate *milieu*, and at once destroy the collective work, the cloud-palace, the imposing architectural creation raised by common consent. It is like the shrill cock-crow which breaks the spell of all enchantments, and puts the fairies to flight. These select gatherings produce without intending it a sort of concert for eye and ear, an improvised work of art. By the instinctive collaboration of everybody concerned, wit and taste hold festival, and the associations of reality are exchanged for the associations of imagination. So understood, society is a form of poetry; the cultivated classes deliberately recompose the idyll of the past, and the buried world of Astrea. Paradox or not, I believe that these fugitive attempts to reconstruct a dream, whose only end is beauty, represent confused reminiscences of an age of gold haunting the human heart; or rather, aspirations towards a harmony of things which every-day reality denies to us, and of which art alone gives us a glimpse."

I remember reading in an American newspaper a solemn letter by an excellent republican, asking what were

a shopman's or a labourer's feelings when he walked through Eaton or Chatsworth. Amiel will tell him: they are "reminiscences of an age of gold haunting the human heart, aspirations towards a harmony of things which every-day reality denies to us." I appeal to my friend the author of "Triumphant Democracy" himself, to say whether these are to be had in walking through Pittsburg.

Indeed it is by contrast with American life that *Nirvana* appears to Amiel so desirable.

"For the Americans, life means devouring, incessant activity. They must win gold, predominance, power; they must crush rivals, subdue nature. They have their heart set on the means, and never for an instant think of the end. They confound being with individual being, and the expansion of self with happiness. This means that they do not live by the soul, that they ignore the immutable and eternal, bustle at the circumference of their existence because they cannot penetrate to its centre. They are restless, eager, positive, because they are superficial. To what end all this stir, noise, greed, struggle? It is all a mere being stunned and deafened!"

Space is failing me, but I must yet find room for a less indirect criticism of democracy than the foregoing remarks on American life.

"*Each function to the most worthy*: this maxim is the professed rule of all constitutions, and serves to test them. Democracy is not forbidden to apply it; but Democracy rarely does apply it, because she holds, for example, that the most worthy man is the man who pleases her, whereas he who pleases her is not always the most worthy; and because she supposes that reason guides the masses, whereas in reality they are most commonly led by passion. And in the end every falsehood has to be expiated, for truth always takes its revenge."

What publicists and politicians have to learn is, that "the ultimate ground upon which every civilisation rests is the average morality of the masses and a sufficient amount of practical righteousness." But where does duty find its inspiration and sanctions? In religion. And what does Amiel think of the traditional religion of Christendom, the Christianity of the Churches? He tells us repeatedly; but a month

or two before his death, with death in full view, he tells us with peculiar impressiveness.

"The whole Semitic dramaturgy has come to seem to me a work of the imagination. The apostolic documents have changed in value and meaning to my eyes. The distinction between belief and truth has grown clearer and clearer to me. Religious psychology has become a simple phenomenon, and has lost its fixed and absolute value. The apologetics of Pascal, Leibnitz, Sécrétan, appear to me no more convincing than those of the Middle Age, for they assume that which is in question—a revealed doctrine, a definite and unchangeable Christianity."

Is it possible, he asks, to receive at this day the common doctrine of a Divine Providence directing all the circumstances of our life, and consequently inflicting upon us our miseries as means of education?

"Is this heroic faith compatible with our actual knowledge of the laws of nature? Hardly. But what this faith makes objective we may take subjectively. The moral being may moralise his suffering in turning the natural fact to account for the education of his inner man. What he cannot change he calls the will of God, and to will what God wills brings him peace."

But can a religion, Amiel asks again, without miracles, without unverifiable mystery, be efficacious, have influence with the many? And again he answers:

"Pious fiction is still fiction. Truth has superior rights. The world must adapt itself to truth, not truth to the world. Copernicus upset the astronomy of the Middle Age; so much the worse for the astronomy. The Everlasting Gospel is revolutionising the Churches; what does it matter?"

This is water to our mill, as the Germans say, indeed. But I have come even thus late in the day to speak of Amiel, not because I found him supplying water for any particular mill, either mine or any other, but because it seemed to me that by a whole important side he was eminently worth knowing, and that to this side of him the public, here in England at any rate, had not had its attention sufficiently drawn. If in the seventeen thousand pages of the Journal there are many pages still unpublished in which Amiel exercises his true vocation of critic, of literary critic more especially, let his friends give them to us, let M. Scherer introduce them to us, let Mrs. Humphry Ward translate them for us. But *sat patriæ Priamoque datum*: Maia has had her full share of space already: I will not ask for a word more about the infinite illusion, or the double zero, or the Great Wheel.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

WITH THE IMMORTALS.¹

BY F. MARION CRAWFORD.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was night and the party sat upon the terrace in the darkness : the light from within the hall fell upon the broad squares, and a little of it was reflected upon the faces of the dead and of the living. Of the former, Caesar and Heine had come together, and had brought with them a third man, on whom all eyes were now turned, as he sat in his straight-backed chair, talking in a gentle voice, and looking from one to the other of his companions while he spoke. He was a thin man, rather dark than fair, with a broad white forehead and soft brown eyes that were full of light, and delicate features, young but marked with lines and wrinkles that showed thought and suffering. He wore knee-breeches and shoes with plain buckles, a loose dark coat with a broad white shirt collar, and a short wide cloak which was gathered around him on one side. His thin brown hair hung in natural locks upon his neck. The impression was that produced by a man whose head is too large for his body, and whose mind has worn out his physical strength. He was the man of whom Doctor Johnson had spoken on the previous day—Blaise Pascal.

"It is not because I devoted the best fifteen years of my short life to religious meditation that I say religion is all-important," he was saying. "There is no lack of reasons by which the proposition can be proved."

"The advantages of it," said Heine, "are amply shown by the absence of religion in most men."

"Not most men," answered Caesar. "Most men are religious by nature, though some become so bad that they

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give up religion rather than abandon their vices."

"Of course," said Lady Brenda. "Everybody believes in something."

"It is precisely because everybody believes in something that it is fair to assume that there is something in which everybody must believe," replied Pascal. "We dead men are past the necessity of making assumptions. But it seems that the living are as anxious to be original, and as little capable of originality, as they were more than two hundred years ago."

"Yes," said Heine. "The human mind, just at present, has turned itself inside out like a bag. It will not hold any more than it did before, but it shows a different surface, and talks pompously of being very full, or even of being quite a new bag. But somebody will come along one fine day and turn it again."

"That is very certain," answered Caesar. "Nothing repeats itself so surely as the human intellect. If similar chains of events recur in the world, it is not so much because the circumstances which produce them are the same, as because all humanity argues essentially in the same way about everything."

"About everything except religion," said Pascal. "Perhaps one ought to say, about everything tangible or manifest. The reasoning of Newton did not differ from the reasoning of Euclid on the same class of questions, any more than the later vagaries of Comte differed very much from those of Pythagoras; or the Political Economy of Stuart Mill from that of Confucius. One might multiply instances to any extent."

"Yes," said Augustus. "I have read that you yourself discovered the

first thirty-two propositions of Euclid alone, without knowing that they existed already, and without even knowing the names of the line, the circle, or the angle. It has often amazed me, but it shows that the human mind in all ages argues essentially in the same way about tangible and manifest things."

"Yes," answered Pascal quietly. "I never thought of my own case. But the interesting thing to be discovered is not the point where human minds commonly agree, but the one concerning which they have occasionally differed."

"I am not interesting at all," remarked Heine. "But I differed from everybody."

"I see you do," said Diana laughing. "Even in regard to your being interesting."

"That is one of the points about which men take the longest time to agree," observed Pascal. "I mean in regard to the reputation of poets and writers."

"Because there are so many of them that there are always plenty to lead an opposition," answered Heine rather scornfully.

"No—I think not," objected Pascal. "I think it is because men do not argue alike in regard to the opinions of writers, because opinions and artistic conceptions expressed in words are not tangible nor manifest. There is not much difference of judgment about the very greatest sculptors or painters. There is a vast difference in regard to literature, and, if possible, a still greater one in regard to religion."

"Primarily," said Cesar, "most civilised men have generally agreed about the principal laws necessary to make civilised life possible, probably because the results of these laws are always manifest. But men have quarrelled from time immemorial about the origin of those laws themselves, generally attributing the conception of them to their national deities, which of course were essentially intangible. Religion with us Romans meant re-

verence for the gods long before it came to mean respect for the laws which we were taught to believe were in some measure framed by them."

"What is religion?" asked Gwen doline. "Does it not mean both?"

"In one sense, yes," answered Pascal; "but not in the more restricted modern use. The laws of God are essentially contained in the Commandments; but a great part of them have been so incorporated with the laws of nations that we do not generally connect the Commandments, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not steal, and many others, with any religious idea, because disobedience to those laws involves civil penalties. It was virtue to abstain from killing an enemy when one was not liable to be hanged for it, or punished in any way. At present it is not a virtue, but a necessity. But there is a class of divine laws which cannot reasonably be enforced by any government, which represent the contract between God and man and not between man and his neighbour. The Puritans attempted to enforce these precepts by means of civil penalties, and they failed egregiously."

"The times have changed," said Heine, "since a man was considered virtuous because he abstained from cutting other men's throats. I doubt whether people are better than they were, but they are certainly different. It is the story of the bag again. The virtue-side is turned out, and the vice-side is turned in."

"The whole mass of mankind is better, but the upper class is worse than it used to be," said Cesar musing. "The morality of the working classes has improved by the abolition of slavery, and the spreading of a religion of which morality itself is the basis. When any great population believes in something good the result must be improvement of some kind. With us the great body of working men consisted of slaves. Their ideas, their habits, and their morality were base, and they could not help it. A man

who can own no property, who cannot call his children his own, and who is precluded from engaging in any kind of competition, must sooner or later become degraded, and it is not just to expect much from him."

"But until man is utterly demoralised he will always fight against such a position," answered Heine. "The whole question turned upon that during the French Revolution. Saint Simonism was only an attempt to teach every man how to own property—"

"By destroying competition," interrupted Cesar, "and in the end by destroying the rights and claims of paternity. That left a man no incentive to work, but the certainty of having just as much property as every other member of the community."

"But the competition was with the rest of the world, outside the community," objected Heine.

"Yes," replied Cesar, "and if it had not failed for other reasons, its success would have destroyed it. I grant that it might have spread more widely. What then? When it had absorbed the greater part of the nation, the competition with the rest would have ceased, and internal competition would have begun. Some parts of the community would have grown richer than some other parts, and the equal distribution of goods would have ceased. Factions would have gathered in centres, and centres would have allied themselves to form parties. The moment there are parties in a nation, there ensues the government of the weaker by the stronger, and the Saint-Simonist notions of equality forbade such a government. All such theories and systems are absurd because they are founded upon the supposition of the impossible—namely, the absolute similarity of all men, which I think has nothing to do with their equality."

"Men may be free and equal," said Pascal, "but they can never be brothers. Liberty and equality are facts; fraternity is a sentiment. Experience has proved that. You may put man

into certain conditions which may be permanent. You cannot put into the men themselves sentiments which can be lasting. The French Revolution was partly reasonable, partly sentimental. The sentiment has vanished, and with it the way of addressing men as 'citizen' and calling them 'thou.' The practical results have remained, with various modifications, and have been felt from one end of the world to the other."

"I have noticed the same thing with regard to Christianity," remarked Heine with an ironical smile. "Everybody says it has improved the morality of the world, but nobody says 'See how these Christians love one another!' as Tertullian said in his day with some reason."

"Yes," said Pascal; "but I am bound to confess that he wrote those words during a great persecution of the Christians, and that, after all, he broke with the Episcopal Church and died a Sectarian. It appears that Christians were not, after all, so unanimous in treating each other as brothers in those days as one might suppose. But the religious sentiment is the only one which all men may experience in a somewhat similar degree, because it is based on fact, is supported by experience, and presents the advantage of apparent probability even to the most sceptical intellect."

"I always admired your theory of the probability of Heaven," observed Augustus.

"It was not precisely a theory of probability," answered Pascal. "It was rather a demonstration of the advantage of taking it for granted. I put the question in the light of a wager. If there was a God, a Heaven, and a future existence, I represented that a man had everything to gain by living a good life, since the blessings to be obtained hereafter would be immeasurably great as well as eternal; and I argued that even if the wager were lost, and existence ended with death, a man who had lived in the

hope of Heaven would have lost nothing by his goodness."

"Undoubtedly," said Caesar. "The question of religion was always of paramount importance, because it is the question of morality. I myself was obliged to make a profound study of religion when I was endeavouring to be elected Pontifex Maximus. I am glad the works I wrote on the subject have perished, for I was conscious of sacrificing my convictions to the prejudices of the college of pontiffs, and even of the whole people. With the people, religion was a polytheism, a worship of images and genii. With me it was a mysticism very like what was afterwards called Neo-Platonism. We were very uncertain of everything in those days, but most of us were quite sure that there was something in which we ought to believe. At this interval of time it seems hard to understand how utterly in the dark we were. The only very definite thing which attracted every one to speculate about it was the certainty of the immortality of the soul, in one shape or another. Most people held Plato's theory, which, after all, was the best."

"No nation of whom we know anything ever questioned the immortality of the soul," said Pascal. "The consequence is that when any one denies it, he is simply told that he must prove its non-existence."

"It is impossible to demonstrate a universal negative," answered Augustus.

"No," returned Pascal. "But that is not the case here. It would be enough to assume that the soul may exist, and then to demonstrate that if it exists an absurdity must follow as an unavoidable consequence."

"I do not understand," said Gwendoline. "What do you mean by an absurdity?"

"A generous uncle," suggested Heine, with a laugh.

"Not exactly that," continued Pascal, unmoved. "An absurdity in logic is when it is shown that if something be assumed, something else is at the

same time true and untrue; or in geometry, for instance, to assume an angle, and then to deduce that, in the figure, if the angle is what it is supposed to be, then one line is at the same time longer and shorter than another line, which is impossible."

"But then it could not be proved," objected Gwendoline.

"It can be proved; but the fact that a thing manifestly untrue can be proved by means of an assumption is enough to prove that the assumption itself is untrue. Apply this method to the non-existence of the soul. Assume that the soul exists and survives the death of the body. Then make all the deductions you can. When you can show me that if the soul exists, all men must inevitably be born with one leg, or must necessarily walk upon their heads, or are all murderers or all suicides, then I will grant you that the soul does not exist; because you will have shown me that if it existed men would be different from what they are. But no such absurdity can be demonstrated. Assuming the existence of the soul, it is impossible to draw any deduction from the fact which is not in accordance with the evidence of our senses. A vast amount of ingenuity has been expended in the attempt, but it has signally failed. It is clearly impossible to disprove the fact. Therefore when a man stands up and says there is no soul, and fails to prove what he says, he utters as foolish a negation as though he had said that space contained no stars beyond the range of the most powerful telescope."

"Evidently," assented Augustus, "the modern argument is that it is not necessary to assume the existence of a soul to account for man's actions, nor to believe in God in order to account for man's origin. Having stated this, scientists proceed to show to the best of their ability that life in the first instance resulted from the inevitable changes in the state of the matter upon the earth's surface, and that an unbroken series of develop-

ments has produced the human animal from protoplasm. It is impossible to study the matter without perceiving that the series is in fact very far from complete, and that scientists are only too ready to pass lightly over the important gaps in the history of evolution, in order to give undue weight to those facts which seem to support their hypothesis."

"Just as a clever lawyer makes up a plausible narrative out of circumstantial evidence," remarked Diana thoughtfully.

"Yes," answered Pascal; "and just as in law people are beginning to question how far merely circumstantial evidence can be trusted, so people are beginning to question the right of science to set up, as facts, theories which are only supported by a number of circumstances which give to the whole an air of probability. How many men have been convicted and put to death upon evidence which seemed absolutely conclusive, and have yet been found innocent when it was too late! How many scientific systems have been accepted and believed by civilised mankind for generations, and then suddenly upset and forgotten for ever! If durability be a proof of truth, then Christianity has a stronger basis than any scientific theory with which we are acquainted."

"When I was young," said Cæsar, "the acknowledged road to popularity and notice was to bring accusations against prominent persons, and if possible to prove them. The surest course in order to get notoriety was to attack something or somebody of importance. The moderns know that and practise it. Nine-tenths of modern scientists are much more anxious to destroy than to build up, because science is slow and affords little material for building, whereas it is easy to find fault with the moral architecture of human ideas. The principle upon which the Athenians put Socrates to death was very reasonable. They held that scientists had a right to be inquirers, but were not entitled to attack received beliefs of

the religious kind ; because to undermine belief was really to weaken the state. We may condemn Socrates' judges, because they profoundly misunderstood him. But we cannot deny that if the charges against him had been fully proved, the Athenians would have been justified in silencing him. Socrates was not a martyr to his own system of morality : he was the victim of an ignorant court, or of a popular prejudice. He was not condemned for what he did say, but for what ignorant or malicious persons swore that he said, as many a less remarkable man has been condemned before and since. The principle that men should not undermine the public morality is not bad because it has been often twisted to satisfy the hatred and prejudice of the ruling class, any more than our old law of *perduellio* was unjust because Labienus and I made use of it to work up a case against Caius Rabirius. He was condemned, but of course I never meant that he should die ; and the accusation did him no harm whatever, while the success of the suit did me a deal of good. That was the way we handled the laws in my time, to our own advantage. But the laws themselves were good and founded on important truths. Similarly it follows that the criticism exercised by pure reason is not a bad thing in itself because modern scientists distort it in order to get notoriety by attacking so important a matter as religion, instead of being satisfied to employ it legitimately in their own sphere of inquiry."

"That is the great division," said Pascal. "My father, who was a wise and accomplished man, taught me that objects of faith are not objects of speculation, and I never saw any reason for thinking otherwise. I turned all my inquiries upon things in nature. I never applied myself to the curiosities of theology. It is not the part of science to dabble in transcendentalism. Scientists only speculate upon religion to destroy it. Fanatic believers build up theories

about it and distort it out of all sense and proportion, like Swedenborg with his ideas about celestial marriage and the like. So soon as religion is made an object of curiosity, the vanity of the human mind appears in its fullest and most ludicrous proportions. Could anything be more outrageous in premises, or more pernicious in results than the religions invented by man ? Look at the Mormons, the Skopts, the Shakers, the howling Dervishes, the Theosophists and the Fakirs. If anything should appeal to the common sense of mankind it is the divine moderation of Christianity at the present day, after nineteen centuries of existence. Who was the fanatic ? Christ, who taught men in simple language to lead a pure life, or Monsieur Renan who has attacked Christ in violent and unmeasured terms ? Who are mad ? The English country clergyman and the hard-worked London curate, giving their lives to help their fellow creatures ; or our so called scientists, boasting themselves to be somebody and employing their choicest sneers in defaming a religion which they admit with truth that they cannot understand ?

"I think you are right in that," answered Caesar. "I lived before Christianity, and have had a good opportunity of judging, from the point of view of a heathen and of a Christian. Religion has always been necessary to government. Otherwise, before Christianity, it was a matter of opinion, and often a matter of taste. As for me, I always had a leaning towards monotheism and especially towards the Jews. The latter were deeply attached to me; and after my funeral they spent many nights before the rostra, where my body had been burned, keeping up fires and uttering lamentations. Yes—religion was necessary to government, both in its essence and in its forms, because there is no government without a morality of some sort. Christianity is acknowledged to be the best moral system and is therefore the best basis for

governing men. Indeed no ruler has ever tried to govern without it, since it has become universal. An attempt was made under the French Revolution, but Bonaparte soon put a stop to that. He was not an irreligious man. At Saint Helena he had a chapel in his house and attended the services every day. That may have been due to a change in his personal feelings ; but as far as government was concerned, he showed the importance he attached to religion by the way he insisted on being crowned by the Pope. The Romans were naturally reluctant to give up their traditions in favour of a simple faith which inculcated a severe morality, but they could not resist the new influence for long. It was felt the sooner because it offered such a startling contrast to the immorality of some of my successors."

"The morality and importance of Christianity are beyond question," said Augustus. "But different ages have thought differently about the practice of it."

"It seems to me," remarked Heine, who had said very little during the discussion, "that like everything transcendental which is so generally accepted as to affect the lives of men, Christianity has two aspects, the divine and the human. The human aspect is the practice and the result of the practice. The practice of anything at any particular period must depend upon the state of civilisation and thought at the time. In these days men will not go barefoot to Jerusalem for a penance. Most people would think it outrageous to give the tenth of their incomes to the poor, after giving five or six tenths to the governments under which they live. Still less will you find men who will give all they have and go in rags in order to relieve the distress of others. Our friend Pascal, here, who was neither priest, nor monk nor hermit, gave up his house to a sick family of beggars when he was dying himself."

"Why do you speak of that?" interrupted Pascal deprecatingly.

"If you will mention an instance which will do as well, I will not speak of you," returned Heine with a smile. "I only say this to show what people formerly did. The force of contrast was what produced such surprising results. The great lord in former times was like a lion among rats, a creature superior in every way to the common herd. If he chanced to be a saintly man, the impression made on him by the poverty he saw, as compared with his own wealth, might well turn him to wild extremes. He became a fanatic. He longed for nothing so much as to sit in rags on his own doorstep, devouring mouldy crusts with a herd of other beggars. It either did not strike him that he could have done more good by devoting his income for many years to the poor, as Pascal did, instead of sinking his whole capital in one charity; or else property was too unstable a thing to be disposed of in such a way. But it was the contrast that attracted the man. He believed that poverty and humility were the same. He thought that a patched coat was the outward sign of a whole soul. He convinced himself that hunger was a means of salvation, and that the suffering of being dirty was pleasant to God. He advised his fellows to follow his example, and proposed to emancipate the soul by starving the body. When men suffer like that they are in earnest. John Bunyan was in earnest when he renounced the pleasures of bell-ringing and tip-cat, and he proved it afterwards. Saint Simeon Stylites was thoroughly in earnest when he established himself on the top of his column; and so was poor Louise de la Vallière, when she abstained from drinking any kind of liquid, for a whole year, in the Carmelite Convent. It does not follow that everybody must renounce tip-cat, live on a pillar, and abjure liquids in order to be saved."

"Really—I hope not," exclaimed Lady Brenda.

"Certainly not," continued Heine,

"and that shows that the practice of Christianity differs in different ages and with different individuals. Asceticism and mortification of the flesh may do good in some cases; but if the population of the world consisted of one thousand million John Bunyans and one thousand million Saint Catharines of Siena, there would be a serious hitch in the progress of civilisation. Now mankind are not meant to stand still."

"No," said Pascal. "Every man should do in his own sphere what he can for the general good. I was not an ascetic, except by necessity, through my illness. I would have thought it very wrong to starve myself, because I think it is impossible to suffer voluntarily any pain without feeling a moral satisfaction in the mortification of the body; and that satisfaction is vanity and destroys the good done. I ate and drank exactly what was prescribed for me, but I tried to take no pleasure in the eating and drinking. It seemed to me unworthy of the soul to perceive such base things. But my constitution was feeble and my appetites insignificant. There was little credit in what I did."

"Do you suppose that a man like King Francis could live like that?" asked Lady Brenda.

"Certainly not, madam," answered Heine. "Even Bayard could not. Strong men, who fought as people fought in those days, needed to eat and drink well, and I should be sorry to think that they never enjoyed their dinners. But Bayard was moderate where Francis was sensual. A hungry coal-heaver who eats a two-pound loaf at a sitting is moderate; while a lazy fine gentleman who takes an extra ounce or two of a *pâté de gibier*, or an extra glass of dry champagne, merely because he likes those things, is immoderate. Fortunately for the morals of humanity, in respect of eating and drinking, the hungry coal-heavers are in the majority."

"The foundation of morality does not lie alone in the question of eating

and drinking," said Pascal with a smile. "It is a deeper matter. Morality is a code of laws so framed that, by practising them, every man may exert himself to the utmost in his own sphere, without injury to himself or disturbance from his neighbours. Morality is the human side of Christianity, as the belief in the redemption of mankind is the divine side. Those who oppose Christianity assert that the practice of morality can be successfully pursued without entertaining any belief in God; and some even pretend that the Christian system of ethics can itself be improved. But it cannot. It provides for every circumstance of human life with equity and justice, and teaches men to be honest, industrious and moderate. No system of ethics ever proposed more, and no other system can accomplish so much. And as for the divine part of Christianity, I say that no incentive to morality can be offered by those who deny the future life one tenth as strong as the hope of Heaven. There is a balance of force in Christianity, as a system, which stamps it as being of divine origin. No human mind could have conceived it, whole and complete, exerting a tremendous influence in a few years, dominating the civilised world after a few centuries. Cæsar was the greatest man that ever lived, and the result of the changes he made and the force of the ideas which he inaugurated, have produced more lasting effects upon the world than have been brought about by any individual in ancient or modern history. He is here with us to-night. Ask him if the sum of his influence can be compared with the sum of the influence of Christianity."

"I was only a man," said Cæsar simply.

CHAPTER XV.

THERE was a short silence. The stars were shining brightly, and the ripple of the sea upon the beach came up to the ears of those who sat upon the terrace. The night was very soft and sweet, and the light breeze stirred

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the broad leaves and blossoms of the orange trees that grew in their great earthen pots along the balustrade. At last Heine spoke.

"I can find another reason why religion is good," he said; "but I do not feel sure that it applies any more to Christianity than to other systems. It is good because it has been the foundation of all the best poetry in the world. If man has any good feelings he tries to express them in verse; so that the excellence of verse is a sort of religious barometer."

"That is a very good argument," said Diana. "I have always thought that the best poetry was written when there was the most religious feeling abroad."

"I think that is questionable," objected Augustus. "The best poetry of the Romans was not written under the influence of religious ideas."

"Because it was purely imitative," answered Cæsar. "But the models we took were. But for Homer there would have been no Virgil; and but for Virgil there might have been no Dante, though Dante was not an imitator."

"The finest poem in the world is the Book of Job," said Heine. "The next best poem is the Iliad, the next the Divine Comedy, the next 'Paradise Lost.' The last great poem the world has seen is probably 'Faust,' though it is not properly a poem but a tragedy."

"But 'Faust' was not written under religious influence," remarked Gwendoline.

"Pardon me, madam," replied Heine, "I think it was. I think 'Faust' is an inquiry into the means of salvation. Goethe did not take Faust through a series of horrible temptations and finally represent him as saving his soul by good works without a religious intention."

"Perhaps not," acquiesced Gwendoline. "But what becomes of Shakespeare?"

"He was a great poet, who never wrote but one poem, and that was not

worthy of him. He was a dramatist. That is a different matter. Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were dramatists : so were Racine and Corneille : so was Schiller. Dramatic poets are descended from epic poets, who were originally inspired to write by subjects more or less supernatural. There is a difference between the Tragic Muse, the Epic Muse, and the Muse of the Sublime Hymn."

" Of whom the last was the first, the greatest and the most religious," said Caesar. " Even with us, who were imitators, religious tradition lay at the root of almost all poetry."

" Why are modern hymns so horribly bad ? " asked Lady Brenda.

" Because Milton, who was the only modern capable of writing sublime hymns, only wrote one—the Ode on the Nativity," answered Heine. " Modern hymns are rough specimens of poetry when they are poetry at all, and are not written as a rule by poets. Some of them are stirring enough, some are pathetic, a great many are sentimental, and all are religious. But they are poor literature. People do not avoid reading them because they are religious, but because they are badly written."

" Then why do not great poets write hymns ? " inquired Gwendoline. " I should think it would be very easy for you, for instance."

" Not so easy as you imagine, madam," answered Heine with a smile. " To write a hymn one must be a great, great poet, which I do not pretend to be : one must be directly inspired by the strongest religious emotions, such as I never felt ; and one must have the power to be grand in simple language, which power no one has possessed since Milton. But though nobody writes hymns in our day, religion has such a part in poetry that I doubt whether any one who knew absolutely nothing about Christianity could understand five stanzas of any good modern poet. Christianity pervades everything we think, write, and do. We cannot get rid of the

consciousness of it. Men may blaspheme and abuse it, but they are only losing their temper because they cannot break Christianity down, as a child screams and beats with its little fists on the heavy door it cannot open. Atheists would be less violent in their language if they were really persuaded that there was no God. Religion is there in spite of them. Other men may be indifferent, selfish, and occupied with their own affairs ; but they are perfectly conscious that they mean to be tolerably religious when they have time, and they feel an uncomfortable sense of uneasiness when they have done something which is not contrary to law but contrary to religious morality. It is laughable to see a man of that sort trying to beat the devil round the bush, while perfectly conscious that the devil is there ; and how he will make haste to do the bad thing he wants to do while he has succeeded for five minutes in muzzling his conscience, lest the uneasy sense of doing wrong should mar his enjoyment of it. A man in that condition always reminds me of a dog meditating the theft of a piece of meat. He hesitates, wags his tail in anticipation, then looks away with a sheepish expression, wags his tail again, springs on the morsel, gulps it down, and then skulks off with his tail between his legs, in the profound consciousness of sin."

" Yes," said Caesar with a soft laugh. " Men have always been like that ; but they are more so now than they used to be, because Christianity has popularised the notions of right and wrong, and extended them to many points which they did not formerly cover. The question, when a man wanted to do something for his own advantage, used to be, Can it be done safely ? The question now is, What will the world think of it ? "

" Rather contemptible," remarked Augustus.

" No, I think not," objected Cæsar. " It shows that morality has improved when a man hesitates to do a bad deed on account of what the world will say.

It shows that he wishes to appear moral because most people are moral, and he desires not to be thought different from other men. It does not prove him any better, but it shows that the general standard is higher. It is a good evidence that, whereas formerly might was right, at the present day what is called right is right according to a universal and established opinion. In other words, men are restrained from doing wrong by a principle, and not by the violent opposition of anybody who is strong enough to resist their outrageous deeds."

"And the change can only be attributed to the influence of Christianity," said Pascal, who had been listening in silence for some time. "I do not see that it can be referred to anything else, because nothing else has been felt through all civilised nations at once. Races differ fundamentally in character. Governments are not in any two modern nations conducted on the same principles. But the broad questions and rules of right and wrong are established everywhere alike upon the Christian system, and cannot be said to be derived from any other source. It is useless to tell people that they may arrive at the conclusions of Christianity without accepting Christianity itself, by analysing the elements of happiness according to the laws of reasonable inquiry. Perhaps they can; but if they do, they have only proved how good a thing Christianity is. If you compare the number of men who might be induced to lead good lives from purely logical motives with those who have led good lives by believing in their religion, the number of the first will appear insignificantly small. To sustain this valuable morality, therefore, you must do one of two things. Either you must maintain the religion that inculcates morality as a consequence of belief, and which has done it successfully; or you must show that every ploughboy, who has been taught at Sunday school to distinguish between right

and wrong, is enough of a philosopher to grasp a highly philosophical topic, to follow it through its inevitable logical stages, to arrive at its conclusions, and to practice the laws he has thus elaborated, because they satisfy his reason, and not because they appeal to his conscience. I will not use any strong epithets to designate the judgment of those who believe the ploughboy capable of all this. It is enough to say that ploughboys are not able to think deeply enough to do what would be expected of them. But should your reformer persist in destroying religion, in the hope that the ploughboy may be made a philosopher in the course of a few generations of education, your reformer will find himself obliged to employ a stronger force than existing civil law to coerce the ploughboy, during the interval between the loss of conscience and the acquisition of the philosophical capacity."

"That is true," answered Cæsar. "I see many proofs of it in the present day. These perpetual riots of the anarchists in all parts of the world are the work of men who have lost their belief in religion and their sense of right and wrong, but who have acquired no philosophical intelligence in the place of what they have lost. The result, as you say, is the necessity of coercion, ending in the hanging of numbers of these fellows. It is characteristic of these men that they do not say what they want. On the contrary, they say they want nothing, as they express it. Their object is to tear down, not to build up. This wanting nothing is the result of their thinking nothing during the suspension of their intellectual faculties, which have lost belief and gained nothing instead."

"And what would you do to stop all this?" asked Lady Brenda.

"I would maintain religion and the law," said Cæsar. "It is not my opinion that the existing morality of nations can be destroyed; but it is certain that it should not be molested. The only objects of government are the maintenance of safety against

dangers from without and of order within the state. Governments which fail in either of those points must inevitably fall. Therefore any government which permits anarchic principles, or a condition of morality which will lead to the propagation of such principles, is doomed."

"Yes," answered Heine, "and it is doomed to a very odd kind of civil war—a war in which the question will be, do you believe in God? Not unlike the French Revolution, except that it would be worse. I dare say the un-believers might get the better of it for a time."

"In the Latin nations—nowhere else," said Cæsar. "Popular fury of that sort soon dies out, because it never really spreads to the masses of the people. It is a kind of insanity to which the great centres are subject. Bands of furious men spring up, curse God and die, and the next generation sows its wheat upon their graves, and quietly puts up the crosses they tore down. Southern people are more liable to such fits."

"It is dreadful to think that such a civil war must be," exclaimed Diana. "We cannot realise the French Revolution, nor anything like it."

"If there is to be such a war in any nation," said Pascal, "modern scientists as a body will be held responsible for it, rightly or wrongly, just as Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and their various supporters have been said to have caused the French Revolution. But I do not think that such a catastrophe is to be expected. The French Revolution was really caused in a great measure by the fearful oppression of the nobles. Now the cry is the oppression of capital. That means that the immediate object of the anarchists is to divide the existing wealth of the capitalists, and the object is insignificant as compared with the question of emancipation from the old seigniorial rights which formerly agitated France. You may destroy capital, but it will accumulate again in an incredibly

short space of time. The utter futility of the idea stamps it as that of most ignorant men, who, as Cæsar said, think nothing, and wish to produce nothing by tearing everything to pieces and gorging themselves with the fragments. But it is quite true that if there are enough of these fellows in the world to make a revolution, the result will be a civil war, in which the question asked will be, do you believe in God, or do you not? And those who do and those who do not will make up the two armies in the field."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Oh, do let us be less serious today!" exclaimed Lady Brenda on the following afternoon, as the whole company found themselves together on the seashore in a deep and shady cove of the rocks.

"Paullo minora canamus!" said Doctor Johnson, thrusting his oaken club into the sand and sitting down upon a smooth boulder.

"Is it possible to be funny to order, whenever one likes?" asked Gwendoline.

"Rarely," answered her husband. "The majority of people are most amusing when they least wish to be, and most dull when they give themselves the greatest trouble to amuse."

"What do you mean by being funny?" asked Diana, turning to Gwendoline.

"Making people laugh, to be sure."

"Making intelligent people laugh," suggested Heine, by way of improvement upon the definition. "It is easy to make fools laugh. That is the reason so many people believe themselves to be witty. The question amounts to asking whether it is possible to manufacture wit and humour of a good quality."

"Anything that makes one laugh is good," said Gwendoline.

"You remind me of an American I once knew, my dear," answered her husband. "He used to say that there

was no bad whisky ; but he admitted that some kinds of whisky might be better than others."

"Sir," said Johnson, "your friend was a guzzler."

"He was," assented Augustus. "A man who drinks everything he can lay his hands on is a drunkard, and a man who laughs at everything he hears is a fool."

"How do you define wit?" asked Lady Brenda, who had a happy faculty for putting very difficult questions.

"In the sense in which we are speaking of it," answered Doctor Johnson. "Wit means the effect of wit, for the word wit means originally the faculties of the intellect ; but what we mean is the result produced by the efforts of a lively fancy. The principal means of exciting laughter in others is to present to their eyes or their minds a brief and forcible contrast. Madam, I have seen the vulgar at a penny show laughing very heartily at the sight of a very tall man standing beside a very little man. The tall man alone is an object of astonishment, and the dwarf alone will elicit remark owing to the exiguity of his body ; but the two must be placed side by side in order to excite laughter by the contrast of their proportions. Generally, when we are amused by the contrast between two things, it is because the magnitude of the one causes the meanness of the other to appear contemptible."

"Yes," said Pascal, musing. "I think that one of the surest methods of ascertaining the truth of a comparison is by reversing the terms of it. When it is untrue, the effect is so startling that it produces laughter. Call Molière the Aristophanes of his age, if you please. It is a great compliment to Molière. But when you say that Aristophanes was the Molière of his age, the comparison strikes me as ridiculous, and I laugh. But you need not go far to find comparisons much more absurd and untrue than that, and far more laughable if re-

versed. It is the contrast displayed which makes us laugh."

"Doctor Johnson did that very effectively," remarked Augustus. "He said of Lord Chesterfield, that he had thought him a lord among wits, but that he found he was only a wit among lords."

"That was not wit, sir," answered Johnson ; "it was truth."

"Cannot the truth be witty?"

"Yes, sir ; when it surprises."

"But there must be something inherent in the contrast, besides the truth or falsity of it, which makes it laughable," said Heine. "It was easy for me to call the young Hanoverian nobles asses : that would not have been funny ; but when I said they were asses who talked of nothing but horses, everybody laughed."

"Because the first statement is only a brutal comparison," answered Pascal. "By adding the second half of the phrase you introduce a second piece of abuse which implies a contrast, associated with the first by the connection between the ass and the horse in our minds. Mere brutality can never be amusing to intelligent minds."

"Very little," returned Heine ; "and then only when it is grossly disproportioned to its object, and perfectly harmless. Now I remember in England hearing a navvy say, 'Damn my eyes if I don't have a pint with you !' I laughed ; but I did not laugh the next time I heard it. I grew sick of the exaggeration."

"I remember a story of that kind," said Augustus, "told me by an officer who commanded a corps in the American civil war. He was in his tent one morning, when a shell fell somewhere in the camp and exploded. His quarter-master, who had never seen fire, rushed into the tent in the greatest excitement. 'General,' he shouted, 'hell's busted—and there's a mule killed !'"

"I think that is more humorous than witty," remarked Gwendoline.

"It is not true wit," assented her husband, "because there was no witty

intention. The quarter-master did not mean to be funny, but we laugh at the liveliness of his imagination. It is very much the same with Irish humour, which is often quite unintentional. An Irish cook one day told her mistress that she was about to be married. ‘And who is he?’ inquired the lady. ‘And I’m sure you’ll be remembering the burial in the spring,’ answered Biddy; ‘and it’s the husband of the corpse, m’m, and you’ll be sure that was the very toime he honoured me by saying that I was the light of the funeral.’ Bridget did not mean to be funny—it was pure accident. That is unintentional humour. The Irish love of putting things agreeably, too, is often very amusing. An Irishman rings at the door of a house on a snowy day and asks the housemaid to lend him a spade to clear the pavement next door. She gives him what he wants—a plain shovel, just like any other. ‘And is it your spade, miss?’ he asks. ‘Yes,’ says she. ‘Well, miss,’ he answers, ‘I’m tremendously obleeged to ye, and, mirover, I’m bound to say that you have a very pretty taste in spades.’ He only meant to be complimentary—he was funny by accident.”

“It is easy to understand why we laugh,” remarked Pascal. “It is another matter to analyse the nature of what makes us laugh. I believe that a man who understands that can construct witty phrases and stories at will. In the first place, it is certain that wit depends chiefly upon some striking contrast, and then upon the way the contrast is expressed. Then comes the question of bringing the contrast into the right part of the sentence, which is a matter of style. Wit, then, depends upon imagination, command of language, and good taste; and those who have possessed all three in the highest degree have probably been the wittiest men. Probably Shakspeare had all three more than any other man who ever lived, and he is probably the wittiest writer who has ever been known.”

“Altogether,” said Heine, “no one man ever wrote so many witty things, and I think that your definition of the requirements of wit is a good one. Command of language and good taste may with study and judgment make an essayist, an historian, or a philosopher, fit to rank high in literature apart from their mere acquirements. A poet must have a good imagination, of the sensitive, delicate kind. But it is the man of redundant, overflowing, well-fed, sanguine imagination who is witty, and who, if he possesses a command of language, can produce the works of a Rabelais, and if he has good taste besides can write the plays that Shakspeare wrote.”

“The witty man,” observed Johnson, “must command an immense variety of images, in order that he may select grave ones or laughable ones according to the dictates of his taste. Discrimination, sir, is a great element in wit. Thomas Paine was right when he said that, ‘one step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.’ It is very true.”

“I always thought Napoleon said that,” remarked Lady Brenda.

“He may have said it, madam, but I do not believe he invented it. Paine wrote the book in which that sentence is contained in the year 1793, when Napoleon was nobody, and Robespierre was not yet president. Paine, madam, was a bad man with too much common sense.”

“‘In digging up your bones, Tom Paine,
Will Cobbett has done well :
You visit him on earth again,
He’ll visit you in hell,’ ”

quoted Augustus. “Byron was of your mind, sir,” he added.

“Yes, sir,” answered Johnson, with a deep laugh, “and I have no doubt he has by this time had ocular demonstration of the truth of his prophecy.”

“Why do you say that!” asked Heine.

“Well, perhaps I should not have said it. I will take it back, if you

please; but I should not have liked Byron, if we had lived at the same time. He was born four years after I died, but I watched some parts of his career with interest. But to the point, sir, let us to the point. Let us consider the beginnings of humour and wit as far as we are acquainted with them; and when we have traced the history of human merriment from its origin to its state in these present days, let us see if we cannot draw from our studies some deduction which may illuminate the subject of our discourse after exercising the faculties of our reason."

"I am afraid that will take a long time," suggested Gwendoline.

"Madam," returned the sage, "time may be made for the living, but it is certainly not made for the dead. Madam, I could fold my legs and talk for a thousand years."

"The subject would be exhausted by that time," remarked Cæsar. "But there is much sense in your suggestion. A great deal of modern humour is descended from our time. The Italian Pulcinella and Stenterello with their comic masks are the great grandchildren of the masked comedians of Plautus. All that is buffoonery: there is very little real wit in it. We had witty men, and literary wits made a good living; but even their productions were very personal. I was often annoyed by them myself, and my successors found them an intolerable pest."

"They were good at epigrams in those days," remarked Heine.

"Unpleasantly so," answered Cæsar with an odd smile. "But their epigrams were constructed very much on the same principle as the modern jest. State a fact seriously in one sentence. In the first half of the second sentence make an apparently grave deduction. Then in the last half drop suddenly into some absurd bathos, or spring into some wild and fanciful exaggeration, or merely state a simple fact, known to be true, which makes all the first member of the statement appear in a

ridiculous light. Take a little epigram of Martial upon Bassus. 'Bassus,' you are told, 'has bought a travelling cloak for ten thousand sestertia, and has made money by the transaction.' 'What,' you ask, 'do you call that cheap?' 'Of course—he will never pay for it,' answers your friend. The joke has probably been repeated several millions of times since then."

"That is a good rule for making a joke," said Heine. "Let me see if one could be made off-hand on that principle. Take two things which are strongly contrasted, but have a hidden resemblance. For instance, ordinary men and professors of universities. State in one sentence a fact, seriously: 'Professors resemble men.' Make a deduction: 'Professors resemble men, who are two-legged animals without feathers.' That is the definition of Plato, I believe, before Diogenes improved upon it. There is the first half. I suppose that in the second member it is necessary to hit upon the main difference between professors and two-legged animals without feathers. The main difference is that professors act as though they were not featherless animals but feathered white birds, web-footed, prone to waddle in the mud, and cackle loudly when it rains. To be short, you may say: 'Professors try to resemble men, who are two-legged animals without feathers, by tearing out their quills for pens to write down their cacklings.' That is an instance of a joke constructed on a fixed principle."

"Why do you hate all professors so much?" asked Gwendoline.

"Because they made my life a burden to me when I was taking my degree," answered Heine with a laugh. "A professor in his glory bullying a miserable student in his ignorance is a sight to rejoice the most indifferent and disillusioned friend. He is one-eyed, but he is king among the blind: he is only one step higher than the village schoolmaster beating A B C into the village fool. He produces nothing that endures, as other

men do, but he deafens quiet, well-behaved people with his diabolical cackling. He is endless in his own discourse. He dies daily, like Saint Paul, but he rises at lecture-time like a jack-in-the-box from his wire spring, screaming the most sour and distressing rubbish at people who do not want to hear him. He is the terror of the young, the bugbear of grown men, and even old age is embittered by the memory of him. He is overbearing with his inferiors, a bore to his equals, a gadfly to his superiors. He believes in nothing, he respects nothing, and, if he knows anything, he has only learnt it in order to scoff at the ignorance of somebody else. Wherever two or three of his kind are gathered together there is bitterness, strife, and all uncharitableness : there young men go down to their graves, consumptive with the effort to learn, or go to the good old-fashioned devil rather than abide in the clutches of the modern friend : there—”

“Really,” exclaimed Lady Brenda, “you are very bitter, you know !”

“No, sir,” cried Doctor Johnson, “professors are not all alike. There are good men among them who do not despise the intelligent intercourse of their equals, any more than they trample upon their inferiors in learning, or wear out the patience of those who stand above them in the scale of knowledge. A man who knows something is not necessarily a detestable fellow, a wrangler, a breeder of strife, and a scoffer. The perseverance by which a man has acquired wisdom does often lead him to suppose himself endowed in a like degree with some other and more brilliant qualities ; but where those higher gifts are really found, the faculty of exercising them is not often absent. There are men, and many men, sir, who, although they have not attained to any high pinnacle of excellence, have acquired knowledge which they are able to impart to others, and which may benefit their pupils to whom it is imparted ; and who, because they have

learned much without much difficulty, do not conceive themselves vastly superior to those who have learned less, any more than they consider themselves unable to overtake those who have surpassed them by making a reasonable effort. Teachers, tutors, and all instructors are generally ill-tempered in a like ratio with the labour they have expended in acquiring their knowledge, for it is not by the knowledge itself, but by the labour it has cost to get it that men compare themselves with others. Historians, sir, whose work is very laborious and unimaginative, are often insufferably arrogant, and not unfrequently make their books unpalatable by interlarding them with remarks depreciating other men who have chosen the same field of inquiry. Scholars who live among the great works of imagination produced in the past are often very cheerful men, witty in themselves and ready to see wit in others.”

“They are witty because they grow imaginative,” said Pascal ; “and imagination is the chief source of wit, as fact is the chief source of satire.”

“Is that true ?” asked Diana. “I should think satire was merely a form of wit.”

“Satire,” answered Pascal, “is the art of detecting the absence of wit in others, so that one may seem witty by comparison. It is impossible to be satirical unless you have facts to deal with, and facts concerning persons. The most terrible satire upon a liar is the publication of the truth ; but unless some one has lied the truth does not seem witty. Satire is not intended to evoke mirth, but disgust : its object is not to make a man ridiculous for a day, but to destroy belief in him for ever after. That is the reason why, when satire fails, it makes the satirist seem a fool. It is so serious a matter that it involves a question of life or death.”

“And what about parody ?” asked Augustus. “It is a kind of satire.”

“A very low kind,” replied Pascal.

"Parody of a poem, or of a piece of prose, means an imitation of the measure, or of the rise and fall of the sentences, often of the individual phrases, in which meaningless words or contemptible sentiments are substituted for the words and sentiments of the original. Parody may deserve applause when the work parodied is at once popular and contemptible, or it may attract attention when the original work is very great."

"Parody is to satire," remarked Heine, "what a harmless little pig is to a wild boar. They are both good to eat in their way, but you must handle them differently in the catching."

"Satire is certainly the dangerous one of the two," answered Pascal. "When there is real ground for a satire it is not so very hard to produce either. Much may be done by holding the person attacked to the absolute meaning of his words. It is very hard to satirise men who deal in very simple, plain language, where each word has but one possible meaning, and by its position stands in a clear and unmistakable relation to the other words. When men write like that it is not even easy to parody their works, because they do not strike anybody as ridiculous. It is not even easy to imitate their style. It is not every man who can write like Cæsar in describing the greatest events. Can you imagine a parody on Cæsar's Commentaries? There is no hold for ridicule in them. But though Cæsar was never parodied he was satirised more than once, and he admits that the satires were good enough to hurt him."

"Truly they were," said Cæsar. "As for my style, I thank you for what you say. I tried to reduce every expression to its simplest form—as you did yourself. The chief element of success in everything is simplicity of thought. The moment you admit complication you destroy force. It is well to remember details, if you can; but it is better to forget them

than to let them turn your mind for one moment from your main object. The great man is he who can choose men, for the greatest of men cannot do everything at once. It is vain to attempt it. A ruler must depend upon his ministers for the details in carrying out his plans, though he may depend upon himself for the plans. In the same way, in writing, a man should be clear and strong in his language, if he has anything to say; if he has not, he may divert himself as much as he likes with the elaborations of an artificial style. If he cannot make an impression on his times he may at least hope to amuse his fellow creatures."

"That is the rub," said Heine. "To amuse and to be great at the same time. To be Cæsar, Rabelais, Shakspere, and one's self—one's own detestable, delectable, contemptible, dearly-beloved self at the same moment! That would be a life worth living. Could we not conspire to possess the body of some quiet little gentleman of leisure for a year or two and see what he would do?"

"He would go mad, sir," said Dr. Johnson.

"If he did, he would only be a poet! One might do worse," answered Heine. "One might be a sane banker. What an awful fate, judging from my uncle!"

"Envy, malice, and all uncharitableness!" muttered Dr. Johnson, rolling his head and poking his stick into the sand.

"Ah, it is easy for you to say that," exclaimed the poet. "You never had an uncle, and if you had had one he might never have been a banker; and though you are called Samuel, your uncle's name might not have been Solomon!"

"Sir," cried the sage, "if your uncle had been Solomon himself, he could not have treated you more wisely. If he had given you money, sir, you would have done nothing that we should care to speak of. There are no more powerful incentives to

labour than an empty stomach, a patched coat, and cold fingers. You did not indeed suffer those ills in the flesh, but the prospect of being exposed to them stimulated your imagination to produce works of lasting beauty. Bless your Uncle Solomon, sir, for cutting you short. He killed the canker that eats genius."

"I would have been willing to make nearer acquaintance with the parasite before he was killed," answered Heine. "But we were talking of being great and amusing, and Uncle Solomon was neither, though he was rich. 'Brevity is the soul of wit,' says Polonius: I could almost believe my uncle had been witty, his communications were so very brief. But why is brevity the soul of wit? Is it? Was Polonius talking nonsense, as he often did, or was he right for once?"

"Anything which is to make a very strong impression at once should be sudden, I suppose," remarked Augustus. "The din in a great factory is as deafening as a peal of thunder, but it does not produce the same effect upon the senses."

"The resemblance certainly extends to wit in speech," said Caesar. "One word spoken at the right moment, if it is the right word, will sway a crowd more than an hour of dull talking to the same effect. The human mind is very limited and consequently very liable to be surprised. If you surprise it agreeably, you may do anything with it. If you surprise it disagreeably, it may do anything with you."

"Like a woman," suggested Heine. "Only women are more often the source of surprise than the persons surprised. Woman, like wit, is full of delightful and surprising contrasts. Some women are like good wit, for one is never tired of them. Others are like bad jokes that will not bear repetition. Like wit, a woman's sudden appearance in a man's life produces a tremendous effect; but if he has grown up with her from a child the effect of her presence is much less. There is pleasant wit, bitter wit, every-day wit,

and best-company-manners wit: there are pleasant women, bitter women, women who are agreeable every day, and women who are only tolerable in a ball-room. Some wit pleases everybody, and some wit only pleases its author. There are women whom everybody likes, and women whom nobody likes but themselves. It seems to one that there is no end to the resemblance."

"No, sir," said Johnson, "there is no end to it, because it is founded on a false principle. Every word you say of wit I will say with equal truth of a pudding. Sir, to compare things which affect our minds with things that affect our bodies, is futile and ineffectual, except for purposes of poetry; for since everything with which we are brought into contact through the senses is either agreeable, indifferent, or repulsive to us, things of all kinds may be compared with ideas which, to the mind, are also inevitably either repulsive, indifferent, or agreeable."

"But why do you say it is admissible in verse?" asked Diana. "I should think that nothing ought to be admitted in poetry which is not logical and reasonable."

"In a piece of poetry," answered Johnson, "the object aimed at is to awake sentiments by means of lively images. Any image will serve the poet which calls up in the reader the feeling which the writer intends to evoke. Heine may compare wit to women in a poem, if he is inclined to do so, and I have no doubt he could produce very pleasant images; but in examining the nature of wit itself, I maintain that such images are out of place. It is one thing to awaken a sentiment by comparing man's life to a flowing river; it would be quite another to attempt to explain the nature of life itself by studying the nature of the stream."

"Evidently," said Heine. "I was not philosophising, I was only thinking. Happily that does not mean the same thing in these days. As for the nature of wit, I believe that it cannot be defined. You may define a joke

and make one according to your definition. But wit itself escapes definition. You can only classify jests by your taste and say this is wit, that is humour, and that other is buffoonery. You can only say that the more wit makes you think, the better it is, and the further removed from farce."

"That is true," observed Cæsar, "and it adds another condition to the definition of wit. It insures it from grossness by providing that it must appeal to the higher parts of the intelligence. Very fine wit does not always provoke laughter."

"The finest wit," said Pascal, "is elicited by controversy. The finest humour is the result of a jovial constitution, seconded by a mind very keen in small things."

"I detest rules," answered Heine. "A man may be witty, humorous, pathetic, melancholy, heroic and ridiculous in one day."

"Yes," replied Augustus, "but he may be humorous, pathetic and the rest without ever being witty in our sense of the word. To trace the origin of wit and humour to the character and constitution of man is altogether impossible. We may understand something about the nature of earth and water, but we can never be certain of the conditions which produce them. But is it true that the best wit results from controversy?"

"It must be true," said Cæsar, "because it is only in controversy that the mind is fully exercised, imagination, force of logic and power of language, all playing great parts together, and all stimulated in the effort to make the enemy seem contemptible. Perhaps no one but a man who has fought with words really understands the power and the use of wit, as well as its construction."

"Yes," answered Heine, "Pascal himself has shown that. He is the father of French style and one of the oracles of French wit, and to attain that position he only wrote eighteen letters in a great controversy. Doctor Johnson himself was never so witty

as when he was arguing something with somebody. Resistance evokes wit, as well as action. There is no more certain method of making a pig run in one direction than to pull his tail the other way. That is a pig's idea of wit, I suppose. Abuse a great man, and he will often say a good thing. Agree with him, and he will take you for a fool, and talk blatant rubbish to satiety. It is incredible how much may be got out of a man of the most ordinary intelligence, merely by denying everything he says."

"You seem to say," observed Augustus, "that real wit must necessarily be directed against some person or something. If that is true it is at once distinguished from humour."

"Yes," said Pascal, "that is certainly true, and mere humour may become wit by the way in which it is used. A humorous saying gains keenness and force by being directed against a real person or thing, with genuine or apparent truth. Humour invents the absurd and laughs at it. Wit sees the absurd in the flesh, and holds it up to ridicule. There is a vast difference between the two. The one laughs at itself, the other bites its enemy and laughs at his discomfiture."

"Really," answered Lady Brenda, "I do not think that wit is always bitter, by any means. People may be very witty about things that hurt nobody."

"Yes. But their wit is directed against the thing, and you know that it is impossible to be witty about inanimate things in nature. Therefore when you exercise your wit upon a thing made by man, such as a book, a coat or a piece of music, you are attacking the maker of the thing through his work."

"Yes, sir," said Johnson. "I agree with you that wit only exhibits itself in attack or in the answer to an attack, that is to say, either in attack or in controversy."

"Most men prefer the former," re-

marked Heine. "Most men think it very pleasant to shut the door closely and whisper to their loving wives that other men are idiots. When the wife is loving she perceives the joke ; when she is not she consoles herself with the reflection that her husband is himself half-witted, and every fresh proof of the fact is a new delight to her."

"What a dreadful idea!" exclaimed Gwendoline, looking at Augustus, and laughing. "Is the reverse true, I wonder?"

"No, madam," answered Heine, with a smile. "No man can possibly believe a woman foolish who has shown enough intelligence to marry him."

"But if it is true that wit is only used in attacking something or somebody," said Diana, "wit can never be harmless ; that is, it is always used with the intention of hurting a good or bad person or thing."

"Yes," answered Pascal, "it is never meant merely to excite laughter, except when the whole attack or quarrel is pure fiction, as in a romance or a piece for the stage, and then the author purposely sets up somebody or something for a butt. Apart from fiction, true wit must always be used as a weapon, and the pleasurable sensation caused by it in the mind is only excited in those who are on the side of the assailant ; on the other side nothing is experienced but pain or indignation. Humour, on the other hand, has no intention of giving pain either to just or unjust persons, and its sole end is to cause laughter.

Humour begins with the comic mask and ends with the harmless jest. Wit begins when pain is felt by some one, or would be felt if that some one heard it."

"Humour is a parade, wit is warfare," said Caesar. "Fine humour often shows the power for keen wit, but never uses it. To lie in wait in secret places, to anticipate exactly the movements of the enemy, to be always striking and never struck, to move quickly and unexpectedly, to be always ready and never surprised—that is warfare, and in conversation it is wit."

"That is better than comparing wit to woman, as I did," said Heine. "Doctor Johnson cannot put pudding in the place of warfare in Caesar's simile."

"No, sir," answered Johnson. "Wit and warfare may be employed in the attainment of any object, bad or good ; but pudding is an object desirable for its own sake, like woman ; and, as the Greeks attacked Troy in order to recover the person of Helen, and sent many heroes' souls down to Hades in the prosecution of a fair and justifiable siege, so also, with an ingenuity and courage worthy of a greater cause, hungry schoolboys in all ages have employed the most subtle cajoleries of diplomacy, and the boldest acts of predatory warfare, in the effort to obtain for themselves a larger share of pudding than that allotted to them by the economy of a parsimonious cook or by the reasonable prudence of a careful mother."

(To be continued.)

THE PASSION OF THE PAST.

THE source of much of the pathos of poetry, and particularly of the self-conscious poetry of our own day, is the passionate idealisation of what we once had, but have not, and cannot have any more. Herein is the virtue of all the eternal farewells and hopeless regrets of literature; and we each of us, in an abiding sense of such loss, carry about a burden of which we seldom trust ourselves to speak, but which to a great extent qualifies all we say. It is the light out of which so many pathetic colours are made, identical under so many different expressions, from Cowper's lament over his Mother's Picture,

"Children not thine have trod thy nursery floors,"

to Lord Tennyson's,

"Till year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills."

But never before, I believe, has it won so distinct a recognition of its character, as apart from and beyond any special loss, as in the Laureate's wonderful lines, "Tears, idle tears." Here for the first time the Passion of the Past finds a distinct utterance, a voice unmixed with any specific strain of lamentation. The various images presented of special losses are merely illustrations serving to introduce the "idle tears," the sorrow which is so large and vague and yet so mysteriously intense, within the circle of the imagination.

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more."

It is not merely that we think of certain definite losses with which particular scenes may be associated.

"The happy autumn fields" are not simply, as the veteran sportsman might surmise, the partridge-haunted stubble, which, in the "days that are no more," before gout and rheumatism had wrought their wicked will, he had quartered so dauntlessly. It is something much larger and deeper in our nature. It is the old grievance symbolised in the story of Tithonus and Aurora, "Immortal age beside immortal youth," our dwindling age beside the undying youth of Nature. Not, mercifully, that our age is really immortal, but in imagination at least it is nothing less, for when is our own death ever adequately compassed by our imagination? Nay, even when our memory is fading "from all the circle of the hills," are we not standing by to see it fade? And so the poet apostrophises the autumn fields as happy, because they are yet in possession of their ancient glory which has not waxed old. The golden shimmer and the fragrance and the fruitfulness are all there, although we are no longer in touch with it as once in "the days that are no more."

"Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee ; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings ;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt
my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals."

Of course, in many lives some overmastering loss has as it were gathered about it all the Passion of the Past—

"With bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake."

But even here, except in certain supreme moments, it is hard to say whether the larger rhythm of sorrow does not belong to that which is gathered rather than to the special

sorrow which gathers it. We love, it would seem, the past, if it be in any sense good, because it is the past. A light has fallen upon it which when present it had not; an evening-light in which the scene, whilst exquisitely distinct, has somehow lost all the irksome trivialities which accompanied its actual presence. It is invested with

"The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the poet's dream."

Compare, for instance, our memory of some summer-wandering with any faithful diary made at the time, and we shall be able to realise something of the sort of glamour thrown by loss. Most people regard with a tender, and often with an intense regret the memory of childhood. Here for the most part there is a solid ground for the pain of loss. We have lost our innocence with all its infinite possibilities; and we may well sigh over the happiness of a time,

"When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first love,
And looking back at that short space
Could see a glimpse of his bright face."

Moreover, we have lost almost infinite opportunities. We have seen door after door closed to us which but now was standing open: we have joined the ranks of "the old who play no more;" of those *emeriti* who would seem by long living inadvisedly to have earned the right of advising fruitlessly. But even here it is hard to say that the surplusage of actual anguish is not due to the Passion of the Past, that is to say to a delusion, as some will be inclined to call it. But this is hardly fair: the Passion of the Past is as much a phenomenon of our nature, and therefore as likely to have a truth of its own, as any other sentiment. It may be in abeyance to a great extent in some natures who cannot afford, as they boast, the time for dreaming: who are too eagerly engaged with the coming chapters even to keep a finger in the past; but sooner or later in all pro-

bability their time will come. On the other hand it is wonderful to see how this passion will affect even quite young children, of whom their elders can scarcely understand how their tiny lives afford room enough for any past upon which to dwell with regret. Past holidays, past toys, past companionships will often affect these little beings with a solemn sense of woe not the less real because in miniature; and they will listen to the sighing of the wind at night, or to the continuous murmuring of the stream with the feeling that it is singing to them of ancient bygone times when it was all so nice, when the weather was fine, and their best friend in all the world had not departed. So the Ancient Sage:

"For oft
On me, when boy, there came what then I
called,
Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy-phrase 'the Passion of the Past.'
The first grey streak of earliest summer-dawn,
The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
As if the late and early were but one—
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower
Had innumurs 'Lost and gone and lost and
gone!'

A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
What had he loved, what had he lost, the
boy?

I know not and I speak of what has been."

Of all appeals to the Passion of the Past one of the strongest is that which belongs to revisiting an old home. There is a fair spot in a southern county, an old home of the writer's—or rather the scene of an old home, for the home itself has vanished. It is the first home he can recollect, lost to him when still a child; and the last home he recognises, for a school-boy has no home in any complete sense. A large grey house it was, with purple lichen-mottled roof and goodly lawn and gardens sloping to one of the brightest of English trout-streams, which wound its way through the deep water-meadows to an old cathedral town some two miles distant. Our life was lulled by the caressing sounds of those cathedral bells which in their

varying cadences had this ever for an under tone, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." Those who came after us for one reason or another quarrelled with the old place, which was to us as a Paradise of God. They dealt with it as it had been Thurnaby waste : the house was demolished, the shrubs and trees cut down, and the disfenced garden suffered to melt away into the surrounding fields. Any ghost of our leaving, one would think, must have been "stubb'd oot wi' the lot."

I remember that on first hearing what had taken place I felt a certain fierce satisfaction that the work had been so cleanly done. It was almost as though we had not been ousted at all, but that our home had perished with our possession of it. No more fear now of any such desecration of nursery floors by alien footsteps as Cowper lamented. One who years after saw and brought us word, reported that there was nothing to distinguish the old place from the meadows round except two or three trees yet remaining, with a statelier presence speaking of more gentle days. Hardly a shred is left us here on which to feed the Passion of the Past ; and yet to me it has always seemed that these desolate fields must be its very sanctuary. There is the river ever whispering the story, whilst the garden trees, a knot of old retainers with uplifted hands and husky voices, bear witness that it is true.

I have not seen, and I trust I may never see, that spot. There for me, if anywhere, is the ancient well-head from which, when it is once unsealed, the Undine of the past is fain to issue, a spectral figure with agonising hands, to kill one with a kiss. Who can fail to recognise the allegory in that story ? The present, a dainty bride, would fain add to her charms "the tender grace of a day that is dead" : a few drops of that water is deemed a sovereign cosmetic—yesterday is to enhance with its delicate half-shadows the brightness of to-day ; and lo, from the unsealed

spring of memory rises your dead youth, or first love, or in some more vague form the Passion of the Past, and with a kiss that is at once more sweet and more bitter than aught else on earth, snaps the thread that binds you to the present, and you wander forth a man forlorn. This is no mere fancy : though for the most part the malady is neither fatal nor continuous, it has sent many a victim to our mad-houses. It is the nympholepsy of the ancients. Men are driven to seek an escape either in leading the life of a superior sort of swine, contented not to look beyond the daily mash, or in the life of the ascetic, who both in theory and in practice recognises that here he hath no abiding habitation, and must look for his contentment to the city that is above. Others, and they are the majority, would fain practice a wise economy of the emotions, and continue more or less painfully to sit upon two stools until the present vanishes with its need and capability of compromise. Such alternate between indifference and sensibility : they use the water of the well sparingly, and somehow no Undine emerges. But each stands on his guard against his peculiar danger. For one it is an old song, for another some pictured face, or faded letter, or lock of woman's hair.

Yet if a man be not faithful to his past I know not how he shall be faithful to his future ; for in casting away his past he remains but half himself. It is the more manly and the more philosophic course to take up the burden of our past upon our own shoulders without flinching, to live with it as with something inalienably one's own. It is the basis of Christian repentance not to ignore the guilty past : it is an element of Christian hope to retain our hold upon the old good things which God has promised to renew. It is infidelity to their past which renders so repulsive certain personages of modern fiction who are supposed to have found out the secret of the elixir of life. These pass senti-

mentally unscathed through a succession of generations, ever hardening in the process, as they form fresh and fresh connections, until they change them as easily as their clothes.

But if human life be essentially successive, why should it complain of what belongs to succession, the continual losing of the present in the past? A river ever flowing on, as it belongs to rivers to flow, between banks ever varying in their aspect, even if it were conscious of every image thrown successively upon its surface, could not as a river complain that they are fleeting. On the contrary we do complain as we cling passionately to that which, for the moment at least, we cannot hope to retain; and by so doing testify, as I conceive, that to live with such a successive loss of life is no essential part of our immortality. We appeal to the obstinate aspirations of the soul after life and yet more life, as an argument of immortality: we may with equal justice appeal to the Passion of the Past as an argument that our immortal life will not be in time but in eternity, that it will, in some sense at least, be unsuccesive.

Keats, in his Ode on a Grecian Urn, apostrophising its sculptured images, expresses this craving in the form of a regret in immortal lines;

" Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play
on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst
not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be
bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou
kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not
grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not
thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!
Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot
shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring
adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;

More happy love! more happy, happy love,
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high sorrowful and
cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching
tongue."

At the end the poet wakes from his rapture, and, in a line I venture to think at once acute and perverse, exclaims,

" Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of
thought
As doth eternity."

Now it is precisely this suggestion of eternity which does not tease us, but on the contrary administers the one sedative to our passion. I know few words of more solemn beauty and stronger comfort, that have come to us from the remote past, than the definition given of eternity by Boetius in the sixth century, which the schoolmen have with one accord adopted as their own: *Est interminabilis vita tota simul et perfecta possessio*; "It is the all at once and perfect possession of a life without end." In its first instance and highest perfection it is regarded as an attribute of the Divinity; but it is also attributed in its degree under the expression of *aevum* to the life of pure spirits, and of the souls of the just made perfect. It is a life in which for the first time we shall have a present we can call our own: no mere gasp between an anxious future as yet unconquered and a regretful past which has come and gone. Surely of all undesirable things the most undesirable is to be for ever broken on this wheel of time:

" Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he
hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough
world
Stretch him out longer."

As it is not congenial to a man to be for ever tossed on shipboard, and he must needs desire and look again to feel the solid earth beneath his feet, so we must desire and look for that day which "hours no more offend;" in

which the freshness of morning is interwoven with the tenderness of eve; in which the past and future are merged in the creation of a steadfast present, instead of rending it asunder as between wild horses. *Flumina Babylonis, sunt omnia quæ hic amantur et transeunt*, exclaims St. Augustine. *O Sancto Sion ubi totum stat et nihil fluit*. Then comes "Mimnermus in Church," and complains very naturally and gracefully,

"Forsooth the present we must give
To that which cannot pass away :
All beauteous things for which we live
By laws of time and space decay.
But oh ! the very reason why
I clasp them is because they die."

Have we any hope that the eternal life, *ubi totum stat* will not only bar future loss but will restore to us what we have lost in the life that is past? To this I answer that there can be no actual repossession of a past that has actually gone ; that were such repossession possible, in virtue of the *tota simul possessio*, it would in the best circumstances be intolerable. There is much in every one's past that he would not only willingly not recover, but that he would gladly not even remember. The river Lethe has a necessary place even in the Christian conception of the after-world. Dante makes it flow in the highest place in Purgatory as a proximate preparation for Paradise ; but by him it is described rather as a water for transforming the remembrance than as the mere water of oblivion. The past remains and is recognised, though only under the aspect of a prelude to the blessedness

of the life that is then present : the memory of sin perseveres in that of the grace which makes it void.

In this life, hope and memory divide the field between them : in the life to come, hope and affectionate memory are merged in the joy that welcomes the old things made new : *Ecce nova facio omnia*. Winter's despair and summer's disappointment having perished, autumn and spring shall meet and bring between them a new season, neither the one nor the other but holding of both.

Should Mimnermus still persist and refuse to be comforted, I must be allowed to doubt the sincerity of his devotion to the past, daintily as he expresses himself. He clasps his dying roses with an eye to relays of fresh ones by which the charming tradition of blooming and dying may be carried on. He has, after all, been only coqueting with the Passion of the Past. He is not "aidless, alone, and smitten through the helm," or he would look longingly toward that Avilion,

"Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard
lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer
sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous
wound."

For this at least, whatever else, is the promise of the after-life ; and to this, if I do not mistake, the Passion of the Past in the intensity of its resentment witnesses.

I. R.

A CITY OF GRANITE.

(AN ACCOUNT OF SOME RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT ANURADHAPURA, CEYLON.)

A DESERTED city has about it a certain fascination and interest which is both peculiar and indefinable. If even some hideous north-country town, the growth of yesterday, were deserted to-morrow, there can be no doubt that in twenty years it would attract a crowd of visitors by the mere fact of its deserton. It is perhaps owing to this species of fascination that, out of the huge library of books of travel, few have been so universally popular as those which deal with such vestiges of antiquity as the Pyramids of Egypt, the Palaces of Assyria, or the inner life of Pompeii. The two great deserted cities of India, Ambair in Rajputana and Fathpur Sikri near Agra, attract every year an increasing swarm of visitors; yet compared with the city of which I propose to give a short account in this article, and to which few travellers penetrate, they have but a transient interest; while from the point of view of antiquity, they are distanced probably by eighteen hundred years.

Although Anuradhapura has not yet taken its place on Mr. Cook's list, it may be taken for granted that some people know it at least by name, and perhaps even have some hazy notion as to its geographical position. It was first heard of through the publications of Sir Emerson Tennent, while the interest in things Buddhistic which has recently been awakened in England has brought its name still more prominently before a certain section of the reading public. But it is not by any means so generally known even to those specially interested in Buddhism and Oriental archaeology that excavations are going on here which promise to be of the greatest interest both

from the religious and the architectural point of view; while the general reader and the ordinary traveller are perhaps equally unaware of the peculiar interest of these ruins as compared with those on the neighbouring continent of India. Nor is this remarkable, considering that the two leading books upon the subject, Tennent's "Ceylon" and Ferguson's "Handbook of Eastern Architecture," were written at a time when Anuradhapura was a deserted hamlet in a feverish and inaccessible jungle; when nothing was known of it beyond the fact that near it there were three of the largest stupas, or conical monuments, yet discovered in the East, and that it was remarkable for possessing the oldest historical tree in the world. The change which has taken place since the publication of these books is as interesting as it is complete.

About the year 1874 an enlightened Governor was enabled by an overflowing exchequer to do an act of long-deferred justice to the natives who still lingered amid the desolate jungles of north-central Ceylon. It was determined to create a new province out of all that part which was inhabited by Singalese and surrounded by men of the Tamil race, to provide it with means of communication, and to gradually restore some, at least, of the old irrigation works, without which cultivation is impossible in a land that is liable to a nine months' drought.

Anuradhapura was appropriately chosen as the capital of the new province, and the revenue-officer who was appointed to govern it, and to form the little hamlet into a habitable town, was fortunately the most accomplished Pali and Singalese scholar that

the island then possessed.¹ No sooner was the work of cutting roads and clearing jungle commenced than it was found that the ruins were far more extensive than was at first imagined. In addition to the three or four large stupas and the sacred Bo-tree, several of the buildings were unearthed and cleared, several detached but interesting stones were discovered and carefully preserved, and drives and walks were cut to conduct the traveller past the most striking remains. But the toil of revenue-work and the labour of erecting and administering a new province prevented the first pioneer from carrying still further the good work which he had initiated ; and after his departure a period of five years elapsed, during which nothing was done even towards keeping the discoveries already made in decent repair. It has been left to the present Governor to encourage further archaeological research in this fertile field, and, in spite of embarrassed finances, to devote a yearly sum towards the prosecution of the excavations.

It is unnecessary to weary the reader with a string of historical facts in order to prove the interest and importance of these ruins. Apart from all other archaeological and architectural questions, the bare fact of their undoubted antiquity is sufficient to give them the highest rank amongst Oriental remains. The proof of their antiquity rests mainly, though by no means entirely, upon the statements found in the "Mahawanso," or chronicle kept by the Buddhist monks of Ceylon, which comprises a period from five hundred and forty-three years before the Christian era down to the middle of the present century. Full details of this unique historical document will be found in Sir Emerson Tennent's work on Ceylon. The chronicle, besides recording current events, gives an epitome of the early history of Ceylon from the date

of the Singalese invasion, as it had been handed down from monk to monk ; and though no doubt the early chronology is sometimes a little confused, still there is not the slightest reason for doubting that this invasion of the island took place some time in the first half of the fourth century before the Christian era, and that Anuradhapura was founded very soon afterwards by its eponymous hero, Anuradha. Its most flourishing period was between the conversion of the island to Buddhism by the royal missionary, Mahindo, and the third century of the Christian era. During this period of about five centuries nearly all the principal buildings, stupas, monasteries, temples, and palaces, whose remains astonish the modern visitor, were erected ; and those who know how lamentably few are the links to be found in India or any other country with this, the greatest, period of the greatest of Oriental religions, will fully appreciate the archaeological value of, not merely a few detached pillars or scattered stones, but the generous outline of a whole city, ready to start up as if by magic wherever the trouble is taken to dig through four feet of earth.

There is one other circumstance which vastly enhances the importance of these ruins. From the time when they were deserted by their Buddhist inhabitants in the eighth century of our era, owing to the inroads of the Tamil unbelievers, down to the present day, they have been buried deep in a trackless forest, known, perhaps, to a native hunter or two and half a dozen fever-stricken villagers, and suffering of course from those quiet, unceasing processes by which Nature succeeds in the course of a thousand years in undermining even granite structures, but otherwise untouched and unharmed : losing all that was of perishable nature by slow decay, but never defiled by the iconoclastic Mussulman, or converted into *gopuras* and *mandapams* by the ingenious but

¹ The Hon. J. F. Dickson, C.M.G., now Colonial Secretary and Lieut.-Governor of the Straits Settlements.

disrespectful Hindu. In India, just the reverse is but too palpably the case. All the principal Buddhist remains which exist there have, with hardly an exception, suffered lamentable disfigurement from the successive waves of "infidels" which have swept over them; and the archaeologist has to make good his way not only through the ravages of time, but the far more puzzling adaptations and appropriations of the followers of Mahomet and Siva.

Let us imagine for a moment that, on the decay of the British empire (which some would have us believe is a not impossible contingency of the immediate future), England were overrun and permanently occupied by swarms of Chinese, but that by a strange coincidence, or perhaps owing to climatic causes, Scotland was never permanently held by the invaders; and thus Edinburgh, after its first temporary submission to, and ill usage by, the aliens, and after being deserted by its inhabitants, who fled for refuge to the Orkneys and to Iceland, was simply allowed to decay and disappear by natural processes during a period of thirteen hundred years. Is it possible to over-estimate the importance of the discovery of such remains to the intelligent archaeologist from (let us say) Central Africa? And yet the analogy to the case of Buddhist Anuradhapura is not so very extravagant.

However little may be known about Anuradhapura by the ordinary Englishman, every one at least knows something nowadays about Buddhism, its beautiful precepts, its strange analogies to Christianity, its unrivalled numbers of adherents. But it is still an unsolved and most interesting question how so remarkable a creed came to be evolved at that particular period in the valley of the Ganges, and what were the external and domestic accompaniments of this great religious revolution. So far as India can give an answer, that answer is fairly well known, but, owing to the

causes already alluded to, it goes a very little way. Such remains as there are tell us of an enormous population intensely devoted to its religion, of a patient and admirable skill in workmanship, of a civilisation startlingly complete, of an artistic ideal, which, were there but a few more available examples, would give us invaluable hints in tracing the architectural and aesthetic progress of mankind. But the same lament has to be made at each place: decay and desecration have been too fatally prevalent to leave more than isolated specimens where we so earnestly long for an extended series.

Failing India, we should naturally turn to the next best place. It is tolerably certain that Ceylon was the first country outside India to feel and to respond to the great Buddhist revolution. It is quite certain that Ceylon was at that time inhabited by a people closely akin to the subjects of King Asoka and Prince Sakya Muni; and recent excavations render it certain that it will be possible, by persevering in the work for a few years, to lay bare the whole plan and many of the details of one of the greatest cities built by Buddhists in the East.

The surprising thing is, that such interesting and important work was not carried out long ago. For, compared to similar excavations in Assyria, in Egypt, and in Italy, the process is comparatively easy. Here there are no mountains of sand to tunnel through, no effects of volcanic action to face, no super-imposed villages to remove. "India's utmost isle" fortunately lies beyond the reach of destructive cyclones, and outside the zone of earthquake; but nevertheless, the preliminary clearing of the jungle which grows above the ruins is nearly as hard a task as any, for the thickness and tenacity of that jungle would indeed astonish any one accustomed only to the woods and forests of Europe. It is as though Nature had suddenly tired of her patient knitting, and had thrown the tangled skein in the face

of futurity. It takes days to produce any perceptible effect upon the dense mass of roots and boughs and under-growth bound together by creepers as strong (and often stretched as "taut") as a ship's moorings, and guarded by thorns of every kind and description. Here you may study Nature's whole armoury: jagged thorns, and barbed thorns, and "shark's-tooth" thorns, and "wait-a-bit" thorns; not omitting the poisoned darts of the prickly cactus, a scratch from which causes you to remember your encounter with the defending forces for many a long day. They will not even burn satisfactorily, these thorns: they offer no leaves, no hold to the flames; and when at last you thrust them triumphantly on to the prepared blaze, they crackle and sputter querulously, and die hard in an odour of anything but sanctity.

But the preliminary clearing of jungle once completed, the subsequent earth-cutting offers no great difficulty, at least during the first three months of the year, when the earth still bears traces of the heavy rains of the southwest monsoon, and is not yet baked as hard as iron by the fierce suns of April and May. It is seldom necessary to go so deep as ten feet: an average depth of four feet generally reveals all that is of importance; and were it not for the incredible quantity of broken bricks and tiles which encounter the pickaxe at every stroke, the work of unearthing might progress with great rapidity.

Some slight idea of the size of ancient Anuradhapura may be gathered from the fact that the ruins at present disclosed extend for a distance of at least four miles from north to south by about two and a half from east to west; the whole of the space inclosed being covered with remains, while it is becoming more apparent every day that these fictitious boundaries by no means represent the former limits of the city. Whether the gigantic measurements ascribed to it in the "Mahawanso" will ever be verified, must, for the pre-

sent, remain an open question, as it will take a considerable time to trace the various connections between the extreme limits to which the city reached. The work already done, however, has made clear one or two important points. It is quite evident that all the secular buildings, palaces, and private dwellings were in the north-western quarter of the town; that the other three quarters were entirely covered with temples, monasteries, statues, relic-shrines, *dagobas*, and various other ecclesiastical erections; that there was a great street running from the secular quarter right through the sacred part of the town, towards (and probably up to) the sacred mountain of Mihiatae, eight miles to the eastward; and that the ecclesiastical section of the town was pierced by several cross streets, two of which are now being completely unearthed and partially restored. This entirely agrees with the most authentic account we have from an eye-witness of ancient Anuradhapura—the description given by the Chinese traveller, Fa Hian, in the early part of the fifth century of our era. One detail in his description has been curiously and exactly verified. After speaking of the gigantic monuments erected in honour of Buddha, and of the gems and gold that adorned his statues, and describing the Bo-tree (our great and illustrious sovereign Lord, the Sacred Bo-tree, as its worshippers call it) in language that is almost literally applicable to it at the present day, he goes on to say: "The city is the residence of many magistrates, grandees, and foreign merchants; the mansions beautiful, the public buildings richly adorned, the streets and highways straight and level, and houses for preaching built at every thoroughfare." Quite recently, while excavating the upper portion of one of the newly-discovered cross streets, a small building was unearthed which looked suspiciously like one of the preaching-halls alluded to by the Chinese monk. It had a steep, narrow flight of steps,

evidently meant only for one person's use ; and it was divided into two parts, the front portion having very much the appearance of an oblong pulpit, raised about four feet above the level of the street, while the back portion looked very like a retiring-room, being provided with pillars to support a roof. The following day, at a depth of about six feet, a huge stone slab was uncovered close to this building, bearing an inscription in the form of a cross with the lower limb truncated. The greater portion of it is legible and contains directions, in the Elu language, as to the manner in which a priest should comport himself in a preaching-hall. The last four lines run somewhat as follows : "This is a rule laid down for the general observance of priests, as to the manner in which they should behave when they come to preach 'Bana' [the sacred words of Buddha]. A priest should comport himself in the place for preaching in a very unobtrusive manner, as a bee whilst collecting honey inside a lotus-flower is unseen, the noise only being heard outside. He should remain in a motionless state, like a picture or drawing upon a slab of wood." Though the incident is a trivial one, still it is encouraging, at the very outset of the work, to be able to verify so exactly the casual remark of the ancient pilgrim from the still farther East, and so to realise words written fifteen centuries ago by the help of a slab uncovered but yesterday.

It has already been said that the sum which the Government can annually devote to the excavations is at present but a small one, and that the possible working time is limited by atmospheric circumstances. Perhaps, however, some slight idea of the almost certain reward of a persevering search may best be formed by a description of two of the most recent discoveries in the secular and ecclesiastical quarters of the town respectively. Both of these buildings, in fact, were discovered and restored during the month of February, 1886.

The first had evidently been the residence either of a Rajah or of a powerful noble. Apart from the general outline, a secular building can always be distinguished from an ecclesiastical one by the plainer decorations of the pillars, steps and balustrades, and by the absence of a carved moon-stone, or semi-circular slab,¹ at the foot of the steps. The origin of these slabs is still an unsolved problem. There are a great many specimens of them in Anuradhapura, all alike in general design, though all differing in details. From the largest and most magnificent, with a diameter of nine feet, to the smallest, with a diameter of fourteen inches, there is no sign of progress or decay in the art of chiselling their delicate traceries and life-like figures. We may therefore conclude with certainty that they were copied from some foreign model; though, so far as is known, there are no stones like them to be found elsewhere in the East.

The main part of the palace we are describing is divided into two sections. The eastern or front section, measuring fifty feet by forty, is nearly square, raised about two feet above the level of the ground : it is approached by a flight of stone steps, and surrounded by a stone wall of plain but admirable design. The wall and steps had been entirely displaced by the roots of trees, the subsidence of the earth, and other natural causes, and in some cases the blocks had been carried to a considerable distance ; but when collected and replaced, they were found to fit together and correspond with a precision that would do credit to the best masons of to-day, and it must be remembered that there is hardly a single block which does not require three or four men to lift it. This platform was no doubt a large covered outer hall, used for meals and purposes of reception, the roof being supported on wooden pillars. The floor was pro-

¹ For an excellent drawing of one of these stones, see Tennent's "Ceylon :" fourth edition, vol. ii. p. 619.

bably of brick, and one of the four stone spouts which drained it, or carried off the water when the floor was washed, is still in position. The western section of the building is oblong in shape, and has twelve large monolithic pillars eight feet high and roughly cut, for they were not intended to be exposed as they are at present, but were built into, while they strengthened, the brick walls which supported the superstructure. That this superstructure was of wood is proved by the fact that in the litter round the pillars were found a great number of iron rails and clamps of all shapes and sizes, which held the woodwork together. The pillars are fully capable of supporting a superstructure of two, if not three, stories ; and the holes for the supports on which the staircases rose to the upper stories are plainly visible in the large landing-stone at the entrance. These two sections are connected by a magnificent slab of granite measuring fifteen feet by twelve, with an average depth of about two feet, and calculated to weigh at least twenty-five tons. It is smoothed, moulded, and adjusted as neatly as if it were a mere plaything ; and as it rests on supporting walls of solid stone masonry (which again rests on a foundation of living rock), and was too gigantic to suffer much from either time or Tamils, it is almost as truly in position as when it was first laid. Beneath this grand slab there was an underground chamber, the ground sloping down to it at a steep gradient on either side, and the floor being formed by smoothing the solid rock. This was probably used as a kitchen ; for after it had been cleared out, there were found on the floor, under at least eight feet of earth, a heap of charcoal, three stones set on end (after the approved model of native fireplaces), and the fragments of an earthenware *chatty* or cooking-vessel.

The main building is completely inclosed at some little distance by a square boundary, formed of huge blocks of granite, in three lines. It

is clear that the two narrow lines at the back formed the foundation for a high brick wall, which insured privacy, between which and the outer line of the boundary there was a broad terrace or pathway. The boundary is broken on the east and west sides by doorways, about seven feet high, consisting of the primitive substitute for an arch, a large monolith laid horizontally upon two larger ones. But though primitive in design, the sunk moulding in four courses on all three slabs is of rare finish and beauty. Immediately outside the boundary there are several smaller buildings, which probably were guest-chambers, audience-halls, bath-rooms, and so forth ; and about a hundred yards to the south there is a small artificial lake, which is now, perhaps, an even more picturesque feature than it was originally. Enormous trees, mostly of the fig family, fringe its banks : their great bare roots twist and writhe into its waters in motionless cascades ; while fantastic creepers weave an endless network from trunk to trunk and branch to branch. On the very margin of the lake is a miniature building, an exact copy of the two main sections of the palace ; and imagination may be allowed to paint the peaceful pleasures of such a retreat during the pitiless glare of a tropic noon. Now it is frequented only by the troops of monkeys who chatter satirically on the overhanging branches, and by the herds of deer which slake their midday thirst at its quiet waves.

Such was a Singalese palace at about the commencement of the Christian era ; and although the contemporary temple may surpass it in elaboration of ornament and profuseness of detail, it has not the same human associations to interest and attract us. The principal and central building of the temple is a platform, measuring eighty feet by sixty, standing three feet above the level of the ground. It is approached by a fine flight of steps, leading from a semi-circular moonstone up to a gigantic landing-stone,

which weighs at least ten tons. The steps are flanked by balustrades carved into the shape of a mythical beast, partly elephant, partly griffin, with a slight touch of crocodile, whose immense trunk forms the ramp of the banister. At the lower base of each balustrade rises an upright stone, five feet high and rounded at the top. On each stone is carved a male figure, known as a *devarpal*, or door-guardian, in very high relief. The figure holds in one hand a vase full of flowers, and in the other the skein of a long lotus plant; and is overshadowed by the hood of a seven-headed cobra. A reference to the standard work on the subject¹ will show at once the interest of this link with an extremely ancient and widely prevalent form of creed. These figures are no doubt intended to be human personifications of the Naga, or snake-divinity; and the elaborate carving on and around them is a testimony to the extreme skill with which the early Singalese were able to work so difficult a substance as granite at a period anterior to the Christian era. As one of these stones had fallen on its face and was found under eight feet of earth, the carving on it is in admirable preservation.

On either side of the landing-stone are two seats, either for purposes of meditation, or for loungers at the temple-gate. On the platform of the temple itself, besides the enormous granite columns that supported the beams and tiles of the roof, there is a square marked by four pillars exactly opposite to the entrance. These inclose a small stone platform, which again incloses what is known as a meditation-table. This is a large square slab of granite, in which twenty-five square holes are cut in lines of five, close to one another. These holes were filled with various prescribed ingredients, such as sandal-wood and different kinds of oil; and the devotee who proposed to meditate after the manner of the Yogis, or

¹ "Tree and Serpent Worship," by James Ferguson, F.R.S.A.

mystics, squatted (to use an irreverent but necessary word) himself down on the platform near the stone, and gazed fasting on the central compartment. Whether it was the effect of an empty stomach or of an imaginative brain, he professed, at length, to be able to discern a glimmer of blue light in the central square. This continued to increase, until it revealed to him the lower world, with all its hells and purgatories; and the perfection of meditation was reached when the blue light embraced the heavens also, and displayed their varied inhabitants. It is interesting to trace on the platform round the stone the hollows worn by the feet of the mystics who followed their curious ritual on this very spot two thousand years ago; and it is not impossible that when more is known of the Buddhist ritual in Thibet, some of the spiritualistic stories which are professedly derived from that mysterious land may ultimately prove to have a close connection with the rite of the Yogi-stone.

It is unnecessary to describe the four small temples which form a square round the larger one, as they are exact repetitions of it in miniature. All these buildings have, like the large temple, a boundary wall which exhibits the largest size of *ogee* moulding, carried out in granite along the front face, and exactly repeated in brickwork along the other three sides.

It is very tempting to confine one's self to sensational discoveries of this description, and to dig indiscriminately wherever a stone of peculiar magnitude crops up above the surface. The great object to be kept in view, however, now that the possibility of its attainment had been ascertained, is to work steadily onwards from certain given centres, only attacking the more tempting morsels as they fairly occur. Considerable progress has been made in this direction: two of the cross-streets are already well in hand, and several small articles of interest have been turned up by pickaxe and crowbar. Here is an iron spear-head, and there

the fragments of a crystal Buddha beautifully polished. Here again is a string of many-coloured beads; and there a pair of small copper bells, worn on the ankles by women and children, similar, perhaps, to those whose tinkling on fashionable feet in ancient Babylon called down the anathemas of the Prophet Isaiah. The inhabitants of the district are eloquent with stories of hidden treasure, and profess a mysterious knowledge of certain marks on stones and rocks which designate the secret places where "golden Buddhas," or "countless pagodas," or "the jewels of four kings" were deposited. Nay, it is even possible, in these remote jungles, to patronise the black art, and employ an astrologer who, by the aid of weird incantations and quaint herbs plucked at a lucky hour, will undertake to show you in a looking-glass the riches that lie concealed in granite strong-rooms, or beneath the demure waters of a lake. Perhaps it is, as the inhabitants and astrologers assert, that the gods throw blindness in the eyes of him who believes not, but jestingly demands a sign: certain it is that neither magic nor marks have yet succeeded in allaying heretical incredulity. It is true that a lump of melted gold coins, worth about twenty-five pounds sterling, was found at some little distance from the

city; but it was turned up by the casual shovel of a villager, and no magician has yet claimed foreknowledge of its existence. But there are other treasures of far greater interest to the archaeologist than lumps of melted coin, which are being unearthed every day; nor is it very probable that the unscrupulous Tamil, who occupied the city again and again, left any large selection of valuable property behind him to gratify a curious posterity.

S. M. BURROWS.

NOTE.—By the same mail which brought the above arrived a small coin, hopelessly unintelligible to any but experts, which had been dug up in Mr. Burrows' presence in the process of excavation at Anuradhapura. On being sent to the British Museum for identification, it has been returned with the following remarks by Mr. Grueber, the well-known numismatologist: "Copper coin of Theodosius I., struck A.D. 385 at Heraclea. Obverse:—bust of Theodosius, D N. THEODOSIVS P F. A V G. Reverse:—Roma seated — CONCORDIA A V G G G." The reflections suggested by this chance discovery are obvious. The spade of the excavator was the finger-post where three ways met: ancient Rome at the height of her diseased, unwieldy magnitude, with the finger of doom upon her, depositing her memento in the bosom of the ancient Indian civilisation, also at its height, and also doomed. Let us hope that the future philosopher recording the circumstance, may not identify the discoverer as the representative of a Great Britain, herself unconsciously in the same condition.

MILNER'S MISTAKE.

PART II.

IT was spring. Milner had been married two months, and as yet marriage had not presented its seamy side. He was at least as much in love with Celia as on the day at Cromer when she had consented to be his wife: her beauty was a perpetual delight to him; and he found an increasing interest and charm in studying her character as it revealed itself. But he did not feel that he understood her for all that, discovering, as other husbands have done before him, that his wife was more complex, less easily defined, than he had once imagined. Celia was in no danger of becoming monotonously amiable. She liked, and took, her own way in many things: she could be ingenuousness itself at times, but there were occasions when she would maintain a reserve that he could only attribute to shyness. Some would have said they had married too soon. But Milner did not regret it: he was far too proud and fond of his lovely young wife, whose eager sympathy with his aims and ambition for his success had been a new inspiration to him.

And now the first Monday in May had arrived, and they had gone together to the private view at the Academy, where his best picture had been hung in an excellent place, and where he had heard nothing but congratulations on his good fortune.

The Rossiters had been there too, and, as they were driving off together, Mrs. Rossiter said, "Well, Arthur, what do you think now?" To which her husband made the laconic answer, "Too many portraits."

"Nonsense: as if I was thinking of pictures! I mean, was I right or wrong about those two?"

"Which two?"

"How aggravating you are! Celia

Milner and young Pinkney, of course: you must have seen them."

"I saw a lot of people, worse luck. Thought Mrs. Milner was looking uncommonly fetching."

"She was looking much too fetching, as you call it, when she was talking to him, hanging on his words as if he was an oracle. I felt quite distressed to see it so soon!"

"Can't say I saw anything out of the common."

"You won't see—that's why! I wonder what you would do if you saw me talking in that effusive way with a much younger man than yourself?"

"Well," said Rossiter slowly, "I don't think I should exactly invite him over to Belgium, you know."

"Oh, if you're going to talk like that—but seriously, I'm not at all satisfied about Celia. I never did approve of that marriage, and when I remember that they met first at our house—you may say what you like, Arthur, but I do feel anxious!"

"All right," was the brutal reply, "feel anxious: only don't bother me about it."

Milner himself seemed to have noticed something, for, as he and Celia were on their way back to their house in Holland Park he said, casually enough, "You had a long talk with your friend Pinkney, Celia."

"Had I?" she said; "I didn't think it was so very long."

"Well, you seemed rather confidential together, at all events."

"We hadn't met for ever so long, naturally there was more to talk about," she explained, rather unnecessarily; and then she turned the conversation upon his pictures, and the success that was probably in store for them, talking with the animation that he found so bewitching.

Not many days after the private

view, Milner, coming down first to breakfast, found a single letter lying by his wife's plate. He glanced at the envelope, which was addressed in a curious, niggling handwriting, and then, as he enjoyed teasing Celia about the childish delight she took in her letters, he put it in his pocket and met her when she appeared with mock condolences. "My poor ill-treated Celia! not even a solitary circular. How will you get through breakfast!"

"It's very shabby of people," said Celia, looking disposed to pout, "but there must be something. There is, and you've hidden it, Frank! I can see it in your eyes. How silly you can be when you try! And as if I cared."

"Then I may conclude you don't want it?" he said, allowing part of the letter to appear.

"If you imagine I am going to sit up and beg for it!" she said, with a little mutinous grimace. "I won't be made a baby of, Frank," and she held out a dainty, imperious hand—"my letter, please."

"Can't say I admire the handwriting," observed Milner, meekly surrendering. She was examining the envelope critically: "It's Mrs. Scratchell's, I believe. I thought she'd forgotten all about me!"

"And who may Mrs. Scratchell be?" asked Milner. Celia was silent for a moment before she seemed to have heard the question. "Mrs. Scratchell? oh, she writes—that was her book, 'A Bayswater Idyll,' that amused you so the other day," she replied hastily, and became absorbed in her letter again.

Evidently it gave her more than usual satisfaction: she had a pretty flush on her face as she read and replaced it tenderly in its envelope; after which she made a delicate pretence of breakfasting, and vouchsafed no remark whatever.

Milner was a little astonished, for she generally indulged him with some comment on her correspondence, and

even an occasional extract. "Well," he said at last, "Mrs. Scratchell seems to have written something very charming."

She gave him a swift look. "What makes you say that?"

"Your expression."

"Mrs. Scratchell was most complimentary," said Celia, with a rather mysterious smile.

"So I inferred. May I not hear some of the pretty things!"

"Don't you think you are rather curious?" she retorted, and Milner could not be certain that her tone was merely playful.

"I only thought that, if her letters were as good as her books—" he explained.

"As if an authoress would be so wasteful!" she said. "There is nothing in this one to interest you in the least: you wouldn't appreciate it as I do."

"You might give me the chance."

"No, Frank," said Celia, "I never ask to see your letters."

He could not quite determine yet whether she was in earnest; but her little pettulances rather amused than hurt him—they were so plainly on the surface.

He laughed gently: "You might see them all if you liked," he said, "though I doubt whether you would find them very amusing. But you needn't be alarmed, Celia: I've no wish to interfere with your correspondence."

Celia looked penitent: "Did you think I was cross?" she said. "I didn't mean to be." But she did not offer to show him the letter, notwithstanding, and Milner would have thought no more of the incident if, as time went on, it had not seemed to him that he recognised that niggling handwriting rather frequently amongst the letters that came for Celia. "She must write three times a week, at least," he thought. "Now what on earth can women find to say to one another as often as that?"

And soon he could not help seeing that Mrs. Scratchell found things to say that did not afford Celia inevitable satisfaction. There were letters of hers which Celia crushed indignantly in her hand when she thought herself unobserved, letters which caused her to flush painfully, or left her dejected and preoccupied long after she laid them aside. But before he could decide to make any comment on this, there had ceased to be anything to remark: the letters no longer came, and, though he could not have explained why, he was relieved. Still, there was a change in Celia: her spirits seemed to droop more each day. She was sitting to him at the time for his new picture of Saint Elizabeth and the roses, but her interest seemed to have lessened, and he himself was affected by her want of enthusiasm, and grew depressed and disheartened. It seemed to him that all the conviction had vanished from the sweet un-reason of her encouragements.

He had been painting till far on in the afternoon one day, working from the model whom he had engaged for the Margrave, and, on coming down stairs, he found letters on a table in the hall, amongst them one for Celia, addressed in that unmistakable hand which he had learnt to connect with Mrs. Scratchell. So she had begun again! This time, he thought, he would hazard a question or two, and he took the letter with him to the drawing-room.

Celia had a visitor. Nugent Pinkney was there. "And, you know, I must marry some day"—he was saying as Milner entered.

"I found this outside, Celia," he said, giving her the letter, which she dropped in taking, and Pinkney picked up and handed to her. For the moment, it certainly struck Milner that there was a light of something very like recognition in Pinkney's eyes as he glanced at the envelope, a sort of smile, as if he found a vein of comedy in the situation which

Milner could not be expected to understand—however, that must be fancy. Celia was looking confused: evidently, the comic side of it did not appeal to her.

"Well, Mrs. Milner," said Pinkney, rising with the air of a man who has been interrupted, "I mustn't bore you any more, really. I'll say good-bye."

"Don't go," she said, as if she dreaded being left. "Frank will be so glad of a chat," and Pinkney, as in duty bound, sat down again; but the chat failed to "come off" with any fluency. Milner could not help thinking all the while how well this young fellow looked, and what a contrast he must present to himself in his shabby old painting-coat. Not that Celia would think much of such a trifle, but—well, he would be more particular in future.

When they were alone together, Milner said, "You don't read your letter, Celia?"

She looked up wearily: "Because I know what will be in it," she said.

"Mrs. Scratchell is still going on, then?" he remarked. "I haven't seen that writing for some time past."

"I don't think you have," she replied.

"It strikes me, Celia, that she's not such a friend of yours as she used to be."

"You think not?"

"Her letters do not seem to give you unmixed pleasure by any means."

"How very observant of you, Frank!"

"Well," he persisted, "but I never hear you mention that you have been to see her?"

"It's not very likely that you would," she said with a suspicion of mockery in her laugh.

"Why, since she is in town?"

"How do you know where she is?" asked Celia suspiciously.

"Oh, there is no secrecy in that," said Milner calmly, "by the post-mark."

"Frank," she cried impatiently, "I don't like being watched like this: it

makes me so nervous. What can it be to you how often Mrs. Scratchell chooses to write to me, or what she writes about?"

"Very much—if she writes things that make you unhappy, or worry you."

"Have I ever complained?"

"My dear Celia, I'm not blind; and if I can prevent it, I'm not going to allow that confounded woman to persecute you like this."

"Now you are talking of what you know absolutely nothing about," she said, with an offended air.

"Very possibly; but whose fault is that? I tell you, Celia, if I ever have an opportunity, I shall make that good lady understand that she is to drop this systematic—"

Celia's laughter had an uneasy ring in it.

"Poor dear Mrs. Scratchell! How you would astonish her! How absurd it would be! Seriously, Frank, you are quite mistaken. Mrs. Scratchell is an old friend of mine, you really must leave things as they are, and not interfere."

"If I interfered, it was only in your own interests, dear," said Milner rather sadly, as he left the room.

As soon as he had gone, Celia gave a little sigh, half repentant, half resigned. "There's one thing quite certain," she said to herself, "after this, I can't have those letters coming here any more. Would it be better to give it up altogether? No, I won't: they can't always be as cruel: I must go on to the end, it will not be much longer now!"

That evening, Mrs. Rossiter, her husband somewhere in the rear, was making the best of her way up the staircase of a house in Cromwell Road, where a "small and early" dance was in progress. There was the usual crush, and they had come late, so that it was necessary to carry each stair like an outwork. Mrs. Rossiter had gained the firm ground at the top, and there was obliged to stand by with her back towards the balustrade of

the second flight, which was occupied by couples sitting out the waltzes it was hopeless in the circumstances to think of attempting. Any annoyance she might have felt, however, was forgotten before she had been planted there many instants: from behind, at about a convenient level with her ear, came voices she knew—the voices of Celia Milner and Nugent Pinkney, evidently too engrossed in conversation to think of being overheard. Mrs. Rossiter did not exactly listen, but she grew more reconciled to the situation. "They are so unkind now," Celia was saying in that pretty low murmur of hers, which, as Mrs. Rossiter thought, with a touch of spitefulness, sounded so innocent. "I feel afraid to open them."

"I'm very sorry," he said, "but you must make up your mind to bear it. I did my best to prepare you."

"Yes, but I couldn't believe it then—at least, I never thought it would make me so miserable."

"It was all my fault," said Pinkney. "If I had not said something last July—"

"I wasn't married then, and why didn't matter, you see; but now, why can't I be as indifferent as you are? for I know very well you don't really care!"

"I do," he said. "You've no notion how cut up I feel sometimes; but men—well, they get over this sort of thing more easily than women. Women take it so awfully seriously."

"I suppose women are very silly," said Celia, not without malice. "I would give it up altogether, only I keep thinking, I keep hoping, there will be a change. They haven't been kind lately, have they?"

"Well, not exactly, I'm afraid," he said soothingly; "but a good deal of it doesn't count. You don't know how and why those things were written."

"Still," said Celia, "they are written. But I wanted to ask you: they mustn't come to the house any more—I mean, not openly. Frank has noticed how often I get them.

I'm always in such terror that he will want to know what they're about."

"That might be unpleasant, certainly," said Pinkney.

"He would feel it very much," agreed Celia simply. "Well, what had I better do?"

"The only thing I can think of is having them addressed to some place where you could call for them, don't you know, if you don't mind doing that."

"That would do capitally," Celia said; "and I could send Louison for them—yes, I'll do that."

Very little of this conversation had escaped Mrs. Rossiter, and the effect of what she heard was to confirm her gravest suspicions. She felt herself burdened with an incipient scandal which she could hardly bear unassisted. She was genuinely sorry for Milner; and yet, deep down, there was a sombre satisfaction that this match, which had been made in defiance of her combinations, should have turned out so badly. "He would take his own way," she thought; "and now he will find out how right I was!" She felt more amiably disposed towards him later, however, when he had taken her down to supper, and foraged for her with both liberality and discretion.

"You do understand people so!" she said gratefully. "So many men throw all the responsibility on *you*, and ask what they may get you. And one can't very well say anything but chicken, you know—it looks so greedy; and if there's a bird I detest on the face of the earth, it's a cold chicken! Now come and sit down and have some supper yourself. I'm sure you must want it. I don't know when we've had a talk together."

They had a little table all to themselves, and in a corner away from the horde of supper-eaters, so Mrs. Rossiter began to try the ground delicately. "Do you know," she said, "I've been unable to take my eyes off Celia all the evening. She looks to me so changed from what she was down at the dear old Hermitage!"

A husband does not find this kind of remark flattering. "How changed?" he asked rather gruffly.

"Oh, not gone off exactly, but still, —well, almost as if she had something to vex her—something on her mind, you know. I'm such an old friend of you both" (she had known them about two years) "that you really mustn't think me impertinent to mention it."

"She has said nothing to me," he replied gloomily.

"But you have noticed it, haven't you?"

Milner hesitated. "The fact is," he said at last, "there have been some letters—" ("He *does* suspect them!" thought Mrs. Rossiter, "well, it was time.") Milner stopped short, and then—"Do you happen to know Mrs. Scratchell, the novelist?" he asked abruptly.

"Oh, I know her, yes, in a kind of way. Why?" asked Mrs. Rossiter, much bewildered.

"Because I don't, and I wanted to find out whether she's an acquaintance I should care for my wife to be intimate with. But if you know her—"

"Oh, as for that," said Mrs. Rossiter, still far out at sea, "I should like her very well if she was a different kind of person, you know; but she goes everywhere, if you mean that. What has she to do with the case?"

"Well," said Milner, "she writes to Celia almost every day; and I can't get the idea out of my head that her letters are not exactly pleasant ones."

"Does Celia tell you so?" inquired Mrs. Rossiter, with a rapid side-glance at his face.

"Not in so many words; but I can see it."

"I'm afraid you see very little, you poor blind thing!" she was thinking. But what she said was, "If I were you, I should get her to show me those letters."

"I shall wait until she offers to do so," he said.

"Ah," said Mrs. Rossiter drily, "then of course that makes my advice unnecessary. I don't know what else

I can do for you, I'm sure. Perhaps, if you could bring Celia to luncheon—shall we say on Saturday? I might be able by then to help you to find an explanation. You will? Then I will arrange with Celia, and now you can take me up stairs again. We've had quite one of our old chats, haven't we?"

Saturday came, and Milner was waiting for his wife. He was beginning to grow impatient, when a small figure slipped up from the basement-stairs, and on seeing him was about to retire discreetly. It was his wife's French maid, a little Norman girl whom Celia had picked up on her honeymoon and taken a fancy to. "What is it, Louison?" said Milner. "Go up stairs if you're wanted there." She was keeping something behind her back, but, being by no means the typical French *soubrette*, began to protest volubly that it was a nothing, a commission for madame, a little letter which was not pressing. "Give it to me," said Milner, thinking only of sparing her a journey. "I can let your mistress have it when she comes down." Louison was afraid to refuse.

"Voila, m'sieu!" she said, and produced the letter. Milner looked at it: once more he saw the crabbed writing he had learnt to hate, but this time it was addressed to Celia, not at his own house, but at a neighbouring post-office.

"You had better take it up yourself," he said. "It may be important."

He felt more at a loss than ever. Celia was so anxious that he should not know she was still hearing from this Mrs. Scratchell that she had actually adopted such a precaution as this. Good heavens! What sort of woman could this be who had gained so evil an ascendancy over his sweet, wilful Celia? What did Mrs. Rossiter mean when she urged him to insist on seeing her letters? He asked himself all this in vain: there must be something wrong where such an under-

hand proceeding as this had to be employed: he was growing seriously uneasy.

At last Celia came down looking provokingly unconscious and charming, and more nearly her old self than she had been for a long time. He had not the heart to tax her with that letter then: there was no use, he thought, in having a scene on the way; so he was silent during the greater part of the drive, though Celia did not seem to notice it.

Apparently it was not to be a large party at luncheon. Pinkney was the only other guest when they arrived; and presently Mrs. Rossiter, remarking that it was useless to wait any longer, led the way to the dining-room.

There Milner found himself sitting next to an empty chair.

"I don't know how you feel," said Pinkney, "but nothing makes me so nervous as being next to a vacant chair, I always expect to turn round and see a ghost on it."

"You will see a rather substantial ghost on it presently—if she comes, that is," said Mrs. Rossiter. "I'm expecting Mrs. Scratchell."

Low-drawn blinds and crowded window-boxes tempered the light to a cool dimness, but not enough to prevent Milner from noting the flash of apprehension on Celia's face as she sat opposite. She was afraid of this woman, then. Well, he was about to see her. After that he would know better what to do; and Milner became fiercely anxious that she should put in an appearance. The meal went on, however, and Celia had regained her usual tranquillity, when a cab drove up and the front door was heard to open.

"There she is at last!" said Mrs. Rossiter. Again that strange look of Celia's: she glanced at him almost in appeal, as Mrs. Scratchell—her tormentress, the woman who seemed to be doing her best to sow discord between husband and wife—was announced.

But as she came in and took the

chair by his side, Milner found a difficulty in reconciling her appearance with all he had been led to anticipate. There was a good deal of Mrs. Scratchell : she looked capable of speaking her mind on occasion ; but there was nothing of the Mrs. Candour about her. Her short-sighted, peering eyes were not unkindly, and a rather humorous good-nature lurked in every fold of her chin—and she had three.

"Ah, my dear, I know I'm in disgrace, but it's really not my fault ! Such a four-wheeler, with a poor old horse that kept coming undone. And there was I, shut up inside, pawing the air with impatience ! "

She was a little out of breath, and endeavouring to fix a pair of thick pebble glasses which would not remain on her nose. "Are you going to cut me, Mrs. Scratchell ?" asked Pinkney.

"I didn't recognise you till you spoke," she said. "But I daresay you deserve it. Well, I hear we are to congratulate you ! Quite an heiress they tell me."

The poet looked a trifle foolish. "Oh—ah—thanks !" he said. "So you've heard it ? "

"Some little bird, with nothing better to do, told me," she said, as she chased an evasive aspic with a fork in her left hand.

"What is this, Mr. Pinkney ? Why was not I told ?" said Mrs. Rossiter.

He did not look happy ; but then no man likes having his engagement announced for him in this public manner. The servants happened to be out of the room, it is true, though their presence would have made no difference as far as Mrs. Scratchell was concerned.

"It is all so recent," he said. "I've had no chance of telling anybody."

"Tell us now, then," said Mrs. Rossiter. "Who is the lady ? Do I know her ?"

"Oh, yes ; it was here I first met her. It's—Miss Blewitt."

"How exceedingly charming !" said Mrs. Rossiter, with the least possible jolt in her voice. "I hope you'll be

very happy, I'm sure. Do you know I never heard she was an heiress ? "

"That was recent, too," said Pinkney, applying himself to the iced coffee.

By this time Mrs. Scratchell had succeeded in adjusting her glasses. "Why, surely," she cried, "I see another face I ought to know ! Isn't that my little friend, Celia Lascelles ? "

"Not Lascelles now, Mrs. Scratchell, you forget," said Celia, who for some reason was certainly agitated.

"Ah, to be sure, you're married, ain't you ?" ("Mr. Frank Milner—Mrs. Scratchell !" their hostess interjected, by way of precaution).

"Of course," began Milner, "I know your name well in other ways, but I have heard my wife mention you very frequently lately."

"You are very good—your wife ? Oh, I see, you married my Celia ! I knew she was married, but I didn't know to whom. I must go and see her some day, if she will let me know where to find her."

With all those letters in his recollection, this remark struck Milner as decidedly cool. She was no ordinary woman, evidently, this Mrs. Scratchell.

"And when are we to expect the new work, Mrs. Scratchell ?" asked Pinkney. "The world is getting impatient."

"The world is bearing it better than I am," said she. "But I should have almost finished by this time, if I hadn't been unable to touch a pen for the last two months. Writer's cramp is a terrible affliction to people in my profession."

There was a dead silence, during which it would have been hard to say whether Mrs. Rossiter, her husband, Celia, or Milner, looked the most uncomfortable. Mrs. Rossiter, though she had had her reasons for asking the authoress to meet Milner, had not foreseen this : Rossiter, who had been, much against his will, kept informed of his wife's discoveries, was devoutly wishing he had lunched in the City : Celia felt that the presentiment she

had had at the first mention of Mrs. Scratchell at the luncheon-table was only too well justified: Milner was obliged to give up the idea that there was any dissimulating on his neighbour's part, and was reflecting with a heaving perplexity—"Celia has been doubly deceiving me, then! But if it was not Mrs. Scratchell, who was it?"

The unconscious cause of all this consternation seemed at length to become aware that she had produced a certain effect. "What have I said?" she demanded. "There's nothing improper, surely, in having writers' cramp? It's been so much about— you all seem so shocked!"

"Respectful sympathy, dear lady," said Pinkney, the only other mystified person present. "But tell us, how do you manage about letters?"

"Never write any. I hate dictating. A secretary makes me idiotic on the spot; so I've been quite out of the world of late. Writers' cramp is no joke, I can assure you; and if it's any comfort to you, Mr. Pinkney, I really don't know a likelier subject for it than yourself—if only you wrote more—with that little, crabbed, niggly handwriting of yours!"

Milner started at these last words. A hideous suspicion thrust itself upon him, but he stifled it instantly. It was an outrage to Celia to have ever conceived it, but nevertheless he heard little of Mrs. Scratchell's account of her experiences under the new treatment, and perhaps Celia heard still less.

All things considered, the luncheon was hardly a brilliant success for the majority present.

Milner found the Rossiter children in the drawing-room when he re-entered it with the other men, and, not without a bitter-sweet recollection of that July Sunday at Leatherhead, went up to speak to them. "Do you remember me?" he said.

"Of course I do," said Madge, rather offended at any imputation on her memory. "You told us a story on the lawn, and you married Celia."

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Bobby was standing by in spotless blue and white, looking like a boy-angel. "Ah, Madge," he said, with his sweetest smile, "but it was Pinkie she liked best! Mummy said so."

"What did mummy say?" asked unconscious Mrs. Rossiter, who had come up in time to catch the last sentence and was stroking Bobby's golden head.

"That Celia liked Pinkie best," repeated Bobby serenely.

Mrs. Rossiter bent over him and shook him not over gently: "You are talking great nonsense, Bobby," she said, "and mother's not at all pleased with you. Go up to mademoiselle at once, and tell her I shall not take you in the carriage with me this afternoon."

"But you *did* say so!" asserted Bobby, quite capable of referring the point to Celia and the company generally, who, fortunately for his mother, were out of hearing. "Not another word, now," said his mother, with much presence of mind, "do as I tell you. Madge, go with him, darling, and stay till I send for you."

Bobby went blindly out of the room, with every symptom of an impending outbreak, which became audible at an early stage of his progress up stairs. Madge followed, but before she did so, came to Milner with a childish desire to soothe the hurt she only half understood. "I believe it's you Celia likes best, really," she said softly. "I should."

Milner bent and kissed her forehead: he could find no words just then.

He was standing by one of the long windows opening upon a balcony and facing the park. "May we go out here?" he said. "I must say something."

Mrs. Rossiter resigned herself: she knew what was coming, and though she inwardly renounced all future attempts to enlighten ignorance, she felt that no evasion would be of much use here. She would have to admit the

undeniable. Perhaps, though she was unaware of it, there was a trace of resentment at the bottom of this. She was chiefly angry, on principle, with Celia, but she had not quite forgiven Milner for ignoring her arrangements: he deserved to feel how badly he had managed. But, to be just to her, she was at the same time honestly sorry for him; especially when she noticed the grave change which had come over his face.

Outside he remained silent for a while, looking stonily across the main road towards the park, where the drive had hardly begun to fill as yet: there was one carriage there, he noticed, and its occupant had a crimson sun-shade like Celia's. At length he turned to her and said: "When I told you the other evening about those letters—you knew, then?"

"I knew that Mrs. Scratchell had writers' cramp, certainly."

"You know more," he said huskily. "For mercy's sake, don't keep me in the dark any longer. Tell me—what the boy said just now—was it true?"

"Children garble everything they hear so," she said.

"I asked if it was true. Did those letters come from Pinkney?"

"I'm afraid they did. But, oh, my dear Mr. Milner, remember—it is all very wrong of both, no doubt, but—there is no reason to dread anything—anything worse than, well—than imprudence!"

"Is that nothing," he said fiercely, "for Celia? But I can't believe it! It's impossible: there is some mistake!"

"Ah, if I had any doubts I would not have breathed a word," she said, "but—I heard enough, by the merest accident." She had not intended to say so much when she began, but in her desire to prove that she was not speaking without warrant, she gave her version of the conversation on the staircase. "It is very sad—but think how young she is," said Mrs. Rossiter as she finished; "and, you know," she added, with a touch of personal resent-

ment, "I took some pains to tell you from the first that Mr. Pinkney was very much in love with her. I fully expected then, and I believe now, that, if her people had only been better off and likely to do anything for them, he would have spoken that Sunday. As things were, he felt it a duty to be silent—"

"Until she was my wife," Milner burst out.

Mrs. Rossiter's own impression was that the initiative has scarcely been taken by the poet; but then this was a thing she could not very well say to Celia's husband.

"You must make allowance for them," she murmured. "No doubt she herself had fancied—and girls are so impulsive, poor things! I have seen so many cases where, in the first humiliation of a disappointment of that sort, the very first man who proposed was accepted, to prove their indifference. I don't mean that Celia was like that, only—and then, when they met again, and he realised all he had lost, and she perhaps—oh, you must try not to be too hard on her!"

"When I think how blind I've been!" he said, under his breath. "And then to be told all this without warning."

"But I assure you the worst is over. After all, Mr. Pinkney is disposed of. You heard him mention it, though how he could be mad enough to go and throw himself away on Valeria Blewitt, who must be old enough to be his aunt!" (Mrs. Rossiter had apparently forgotten her former advocacy of this very lady, but much had happened since then.) "Still he is engaged, and I needn't tell you how much that means. And, as I said, it is not as if it had ever been serious."

"You don't seem to understand," said Milner. "I was fool enough to believe, till this afternoon, that my wife married me, not to show her indifference to anybody else, but for love. I was mistaken, it appears. I find that serious enough!"

"She will learn to love you—after

this : only be patient with her, and it will come."

"Should I believe in it even if it did come ? But all that is rather premature just now, and I have kept you long enough out here discussing my affairs : shall we go back ?"

Mrs. Rossiter was afraid to offer any objection, though she was anything but anxious to re-enter her drawing-room just then. Much to her relief, however, both Mrs. Scratchell and Pinkney had left, pleading engagements elsewhere, and without waiting to take leave of their hostess, whom they probably thought farther away.

Milner waited to put his wife into the carriage, a little victoria he had just bought for her, and then he said carelessly : "I think I shall walk. I've a headache, and walking will do me more good."

For he felt that to drive in the park with Celia, with this skeleton sitting bodkin between them, was too severe an ordeal to be faced just then. Celia seemed to understand, for her eyes had a piteous look in them. "Then home, Andrews, please," she said : she was in no mood for driving either.

As Milner walked home he tried to nerve himself for what lay before him. Cost what it might, he must learn the whole truth from Celia's lips. That she could have anything shameful to confess was a possibility of which he did not dream ; but there must be no more secrecy, and when they understood one another more fully, he would know how far life would have to be altered for the future—the dreary loveless future he saw before him and shrank from.

Celia had reached home long before him. He found her in her pretty room, with its cool blue and white tones, and its outlook on level turf and stately elms. She had a restless, expectant air, though she did her best to assume a perfect unconsciousness that any crisis was at hand.

"Is your head better ?" she said. "It was rather a dull luncheon, I thought."

"It was not for want of information, then," he said grimly : "at least in my case."

"I think I can guess what you mean," she said, and her voice was unsteady.

"Why did you tell me that your correspondent was Mrs. Scratchell ?" he asked abruptly.

"The writing was like hers. I thought it was at first—and afterwards, there was nothing to be gained by telling you it was not."

"Was there anything to be gained by letting me believe it was ?"

"A good deal : you would think less about it."

"And that was why you had them addressed to you at a post-office ?"

"Ah ! so you know that ?" she said.

"I know more than you imagine. Good heavens, Celia, that you should have stooped to such a trick as that !"

"It was not right, perhaps, but it was only done to spare you !"

"You are too considerate ! Don't be hypocritical, Celia—not now !"

"You have no right to speak like that," she said, flushing angrily. "I never meant to deceive you when I began : I was drawn into it gradually. And what is it after all—other people do it !"

He could scarcely believe his ears.

"Other women, yes—but you, Celia !" he cried.

"Oh, and men too—even clever men."

"You refer to Pinkney, I presume ?" he said.

"I do mean Mr. Pinkney, yes. If you had been different, I should never have been driven to do what I did. Oh, you will think it very weak of me, no doubt, but I do care a great deal for appreciation, for praise—yes, if it came from the merest scribbler I should value it all the same."

She had admitted it. All further doubt was impossible. And she did not even confess it with penitence and tears : she actually gloried in it, standing before him to justify her conduct with this cynical effrontery ! Was

this really Celia? Or was he going mad?

"And I am to understand that you applied to Pinkney for this—appreciation?" he said, when he could speak.

"Yes: he was the first to tell me of it, and there was no one else."

"You can talk of it like that? But go on—let me hear it all: you wrote?"

"I wrote. You are speaking to me very strangely, Frank!"

"Am I? We are both speaking strangely, I think," he said; and indeed this conversation gave him the dreary wonder one has sometimes in the course of an ugly dream. "Well, how often did you write?"

"Three times altogether: once at the beginning, once about the address, and last night, to say that I would go on with it no longer."

He did not believe her. "You heard more frequently than that," he said.

"Oh, much; but they were not what I had expected, they grew so cruel and cold, especially lately."

"In the circumstances," he said, with a bitter smile, "you can hardly expect me to condole with you on that!"

"I do not expect it," she said proudly. "I know very well you would not fret as I do about it."

"Probably not; and may I ask, have you kept this correspondence?"

"It is here—in my desk."

"I should like to see it."

She was startled. "Not to read it, Frank? You!"

"Listen, Celia, I don't want to be hard on you: I only want to make sure that all this is at an end. If I could be certain that you realised what you have done, that you are sorry, I will burn these letters unread, and trust you still!"

She looked mutinous. "You talk exactly as if I were a child who had been naughty. I don't know now what I have done to be treated like this!" she said.

"After that you leave me no choice. I shall insist now on seeing those letters!"

"What! when you have avoided looking at them all this time?"

"I do not remember that you gave me many opportunities!"

"If you wanted to know what they were like, there were other ways," she said coldly.

"I do not break open desks."

"I mean, there were the papers."

The papers! The Agony-Column! Good heavens! Had they been communicating in that way! "I might have done much that it is too late to do now," he said; "but, at present, I want to see those letters."

"But why? Tell me why?"

"Why? Because I want to know what I have to deal with, and how far I have the right to punish the scoundrel who has injured me!"

"You will only make yourself ridiculous by revenge, Frank!" she cried.

"We shall see, but never mind that now—the letters, Celia. If you refuse, what is there left for me to think?"

She rose and went to her desk. "You have asked for them, and you shall have them," she said. "I did my best to keep them from you, and now I suppose you will be angrier than ever!"

She held out a packet towards him. "I wish I was Saint Elizabeth," she said, with a pathetic little smile; "then they would turn into roses, perhaps!"

He found such an allusion just then in the worst possible taste, but he did not express his disgust in words. He took the letters silently from her hand, and opened the first with a sickening dread.

But at the first glance at the contents he sat stupefied. There was only a sheet of paper with a printed heading, and, pasted upon it, a newspaper-extract with the date and name of the journal in which it had appeared, written in the same curious, crabbed writing he had seen on so many envelopes. He opened the next, it contained a similar extract. They were all alike; and the extracts were

references, more or less severe, to his recently exhibited pictures, forwarded apparently by a firm which made a business of supplying such things.

"Celia," he said, in a very altered tone, "do you mean to say this is all?"

She had been watching him with a pretty furtive anxiety. "There were two I burnt, because they made me so angry," she said; "and one—a nice one—that Louison brought me this morning. I kept that to show you last."

"And this writing—whose is that?"

"I'm sure I don't know," she said, "the agent-man's, or his clerk's, or somebody's. It's not Mrs. Scratchell's."

He understood at last, and the intense relief he felt was embittered by a great remorse. While he had been harbouring these unworthy suspicions, she had had no thought in all her innocent concealments but desire for his renown and tender consideration for his peace of mind. He could have fallen at her feet, and

confessed the injustice he had done her; but he dared not—the very mention of it would be a fresh insult to her.

"You don't seem to care so very much after all," said Celia, "aren't they as bad as you expected?"

"Thank God—no!" he said presently.

"Then why—oh, Frank, did you think that?" She turned from him and covered her face with her hands: she too, had understood.

He stood by, humbled, deeply ashamed, not caring just then to plead the excuses he might have urged, waiting till she should make some sign.

When the love is on both sides, jealousy loses half its odiousness and is even a homage in its way. Celia had been deeply wounded, but there were consolations; and at last she turned to him again, with a laugh in which a sob was lingering.

"So they have turned into roses after all!" she said.

F. ANSTEY.

THE APPEASEMENT OF DEMETER.

I.

DEMETER devastated our good land,
 In blackness for her daughter snatched below.
 Smoke-pillar or loose hillock was the sand,
 Where soil had been to clasp warm seed and throw
 The wheat, vine, olive, ripe to Summer's ray.
 Now whether night advancing, whether day,
 Scarce did the baldness show:
 The hand of man was a defeated land.

II.

Necessity, the primal goad to growth,
 Stood shrunken; Youth and Age appeared as one,
 Like Winter Summer; good as labour sloth;
 Nor was there answer wherefore beamed the sun,
 Or why men drew the breath to carry pain.
 High reared the ploughshare, broken lay the wain,
 Idly the flax-wheel spun
 Unridered: starving lords were wasp and moth.

III.

Lean grassblades losing green on their bent flags,
 Sang chilly to themselves; lone honey-bees
 Pursued the flowers that were not with dry bags;
 Sole sound aloud the snap of sapless trees,
 More sharp than slingstones on hard breastplates hurled.
 Back to first chaos tumbled the stopped world,
 Careless to lure or please.
 A Nature of gaunt ribs, an Earth of crags.

IV.

No smile Demeter cast: the gloom she saw
 Well draped her direful musing; for in gloom,
 In thicker gloom, deep down the cavern-maw,
 Her sweet had vanished; liker unto whom,
 And whose pale place of habitation mute,
 She and all seemed where seasons, pledged for fruit
 Anciently, gaped for bloom:
 Where hand of man was as a plucked fowl's claw.

V.

The wrathful Queen descended on a vale,
That ere the ravished hour for richness heaved.
Iambe, maiden of the merry tale,
Beside her eyed the once red-cheeked, green-leaved.
It looked as if the Deluge had withdrawn.
Pity caught at her throat; her jests were gone.

More than for her who grieved,
She could for this waste home have piped the wail.

VI.

Iambe, her dear mountain-rivulet
To waken laughter from cold stones, beheld
A riven wheatfield cracking for the wet,
And seed like infant's teeth, that never swelled,
Apeep up flinty ridges, milkless round.
Teeth of the giants marked she where thin ground
Rocky in spikes rebelled
Against the hand here slack as rotted net.

VII.

The valley people up the ashen scoop
She beckoned, aiming hopelessly to win
Her Mistress in compassion of yon group
So pinched and wizened; with their aged grin,
For lack of warmth to smile on mouths of woe,
White as in chalk outlining little O
Dumb, from a falling chin;
Young, old, alike half-bent to make the hoop.

VIII.

Their tongues of birds they wagged, weak-voiced as when
Dark underwaters the recesses choke;
With cluck and upper quiver of a hen
In grasp, past pecking: cry before the croak.
Relentlessly their gold-haired Heaven, their fount
Bountiful of old days, heard them recount
This and that cruel stroke:
Nor eye nor ear had she for piteous men.

IX.

A figure of black rock by sunbeams crowned
Through stormclouds, where the volumed shades enfold
An earth in awe before the claps resound
And woods and dwellings are as billows rolled,
The barren Nourisher unmelted shed
Death from the looks that wandered with the dead
Out of the realms of gold,
In famine for her lost, her lost unfound.

X.

Iambe from her Mistress tripped; she raised
 The cattle-call above the moan of prayer;
 And slowly out of fields their fancy grazed,
 Among the droves, defiled a horse and mare:
 The wrecks of horse and mare: such ribs as view
 Seas that have struck brave ships ashore, while through
 Shoots the swift foamspit: bare
 They nodded, and Demeter on them gazed.

XI.

Howbeit the season of the dancing blood,
 Forgot was horse of mare, yea, mare of horse:
 Reversed, each head at either's flank, they stood.
 Whereat the Goddess, in a dim remorse,
 Laid hand on them, and smacked; and her touch pricked,
 Neighing within, at either's flank they licked;
 Played on a moment's force
 At courtship, withering to the crazy nod.

XII.

The nod was that we gather for consent;
 And mournfully amid the group a dame,
 Interpreting the thing in nature meant,
 Her hands held out like bearers of the flame,
 And nodded for the negative sideways.
 Keen at her Mistress glanced Iambe: rays
 From the Great Mother came:
 Her lips were opened wide; the curse was rent.

XIII.

She laughed: since our first harvesting heard none
 Like thunder of the song of heart: her face,
 The dreadful darkness, shook to mounted sun,
 And peal on peal across the hills held chase.
 She laughed herself to water, laughed to fire;
 Laughed the torrential laugh of dam and sire
 Full of the marrowy race.
 Her laughter, Gods! was flesh on skeleton.

XIV.

The valley people huddled, broke, afraid,
 Assured, and taking lightning in the veins,
 They puffed, they leaped, linked hands, together swayed,
 Unwitting happiness till golden rains
 Of tears in laughter, laughter weeping, smote
 Knowledge of milky mercy from that throat
 Pouring to heal their pains:
 And one bold youth set mouth at a shy maid.

XV.

Iambe clapped to see the kindly lusts
Inspire the valley people, still on seas,
Like poplar-tops relieved from stress of gusts,
With rapture in their wonderment; but these,
Low homage being rendered, ran to plough,
Fed by the laugh, as by the mother cow
 Calves at the teats they tease:
Soon drove they through the yielding furrow-crusts.

XVI.

Uprose the blade in green, the leaf in red,
The tree of water and the tree of wood:
And soon among the branches overhead
Gave beauty juicy issue sweet for food.
O Laughter! beauty plumped and love had birth.
Laughter! O thou reviver of sick Earth!
 Good for the spirit, good
For body, thou! to both art wine and bread!

GEORGE MEREDITH.

AN IDYL OF ISCHIA.

It was a quiet, sunny August evening. In Casamicciola, one of the principal places in Ischia and especially famous for its numerous medicinal springs, the evening life began to unfold itself after the burning heat of the day. The streets resounded with song and laughter: the long straw jalousies were rolled up: the leaf-hidden balconies and green verandahs became filled with gossiping matrons, who now let the spindle rest, or with smiling maidens, who sent down stolen and coquettish glances to the peasant youths, who with a pink behind the ear and a love-song on their lips, slowly with their heavily-laden asses wended their way homeward from their field-work in the valley below. Up above on the *piazza*, the forum of Casamicciola, graver matters were discussed. Here stood the men in little groups, some in earnest conversation on the near prospect of the approaching vintage: others screaming and gesticulating when the dear *bajocchi* came in question: others again calmly smoking a cigar and now and then snubbing the lively little children, who in their national costume of shirt and straw hat, or once in a while of straw hat without the shirt, frequently annoyed the men, now by their play, now by the howl of misery which they uttered when their mothers suddenly appeared and, amidst a tempest of outeries of the most varied description, carried them off to bed.

In the midst of these pursued and pursuing forms, high raised above the petty interests that busied the groups about him, sat, throned in calm dignity, a figure clothed in a gigantic Panama hat, a jacket white as chalk, and the unmentionables of the municipal guard. He sat (pardon me, that I betray it, Pisani) on a quite

ordinary rush-bottomed chair before the guard-house, in which no guard was either then to be found or had ever been observed by me, and which seemed to be placed there only to furnish a side-piece to the cross of Savoy, surmounted by a crown, which had been set up on the wall close beside it, and above which were displayed the proud words, *Guardia Municipale*. As Pisani sat there, supporting his head heavy with thought on the palm of his right hand, and balancing a little cigarette between his lips, it was easy to see that he was one of the first men of the island. Did a couple of women begin to scold each other, at once his glance shot wrathful and threatening in their direction and they became still again: were a couple of children too noisily boisterous, slowly rose the shadow of the Panama, like the yet low clouds before the outbreak of the tornado, and the terror-stricken offenders ventured not to await the tempest, but fled helter-skelter into the next side street: even the men lowered their voices as they passed by before him, and greeted him with a salute of even profounder reverence than they gave their priest.

And, in truth, Pisani deserved all these honours. Not only did he possess the largest genuine Panama hat in Ischia (and the like on such a little island is not without significance) but he had after the revolution in Naples entertained the Piedmontese ambassador, who made his appearance to take possession of the island, and he had (what was most important of all) prescribed Vichy water for Garibaldi, when the latter two years before was using the baths there upon the island. This Vichy water made Pisani immortal, at least as long as he lived. He had at one stroke crushed his most

dangerous rival the apothecary, who hardly knew the whereabouts of Paris, let alone the nature of Vichy water; and it was therefore not to be wondered at that every stranger who set foot upon the island and had anything officially to do with Pisani, came also forthwith to hear the history of the Vichy water, so that he might later, on his return home, be able to astonish his fellow-countrymen with the geographical acquirements and the commercial development of Ischia.

Pisani saw me loitering across the piazza, and the brim of the Panama set itself in motion,—not wildly and threateningly, but benevolently, good-humouredly beckoning, it undulated up and down. Pisani has a weakness, an amiable weakness—I know a whole nation which shares it with him : he likes to talk with strangers, to walk arm-in-arm with them, to tell them of the Vichy water, and of his responsibilities as the first commercial functionary of the island ; and all this not merely because he takes an interest in the strangers, but also because the strangers give him a certain distinction, which, in connection with the conspicuous opportunity to speak a language which he himself believes to be French, raises him high above the apothecary, to say nothing of the other and more subordinate inhabitants of the island.

"A beautiful day and a glorious evening, signore," he began, as I drew near the guard-house. "Are you well contented with the lodgings I recommended to you ?"

"Exceedingly so," I replied.

"I readily believe it," said he with quiet dignity. "Where I recommend a stranger no one has yet complained. But if anything should at any time be not just right you have only to let me know : I understand how to arrange the matter. Have you seen my new highway improvements?" added he hastily, as he saw that I made as if I were about to go on.

"The communal work out yonder before the gate?"

"Yes, the communal work, or ours rather ; that is to say, I am the originator. I made the plans and surveys. Oh, that is a work ! *Per Baccho !* it will cost a good sum of ducats before we get through with it ; but it will be the best road in Ischia, the very best. A cabriolet will be able to go upon it from Casamicciola to Forio."

I declared that I had never cherished the slightest doubt of it ; but Pisani, who was resolved not to let go the fish which he had hooked, rose and said : " Permit me, *signore*, to accompany you. I am obliged, at any rate, to go out to pay the labourers their day's wages. It is an ungrateful set here on the island : the rascals won't trust even the communal authorities, and refuse to wait till Saturday night. Your arm ? Thanks !"

"Seems to me I saw you this morning sitting out yonder watching the labourers," I remarked carelessly as we lounged across the square.

Pisani made no reply to this observation : it was as if I had spoken to the wind. The brim of the Panama, however, was in an incessant rocking motion, now to right, now to left, but the hat itself kept its place immovably while the hats of the others bowed down to the ground. Thus we reached the church, where Pisani beckoned with his hand to an old invalided road-digger, who was sitting there with a great brass plate upon his breast and eating a head of salad.

"This man oversees the labourers," said he, with the dignity of a king. "Have you done anything to day, Viaggio ? Good ! Then we will go and see how far the work has advanced."

Outside the gate Pisani let go my arm and began to talk in Italian. He explained to me, not for that matter without a certain technical knowledge, the direction and height of the road, and then approached three or four other road-diggers, who were all busied with the same employment in which we had interrupted Viaggio.

Pisani's authority seemed to be

diminished in proportion as the distance from the *piazza* increased for there soon arose a dispute on the subject which, in Italy, gives occasion to the most abusive epithets and the most frequent dagger-thrusts — the number of the *bajocchi*. I withdrew, in order not to be a witness of a possible revolutionary outbreak, and as a path, shaded by the lofty bamboo-like reed, which is here called *canna*, turned off close before me, I followed it, and the more readily that a pair of tambourines sounded invitingly from a little vineyard, growing more and more loudly jubilant as the noise of the quarrel on the highway died away in the distance. Soon I heard them distinctly, these strange, now inviting, now exulting, now triumphantly bantering, shrill, and taunting tones, wild and elfin as the dark period that gave birth to them, soft and sensuous as the people among whom they rose. It was the first time that I had heard the tarantella on Italian soil. Presently song mingled with the tinkling clang of the tambourines: it seemed to me to be a sort of improvisation, and, curious, I stood still to listen, as one of the common, everlasting vineyard-walls obstructed my view.

Suddenly the tambourines were hushed: all was still: then came a fresh joyous laugh, and I heard light hasty steps, as of young girls, who ran towards the house, while at the same time the firmer tread of my friend, the Signor Pisani, came crunching down the path.

"A bad set here on the island, *signore*," he remarked, as he thrust into his pocket what remained of the copper money he had been paying out. "Never content with what is given them: to eat macaroni, to drink wine, and beat the tambourine from morning till night, that pleases them, but to work—!" and he made one of those indescribable gestures accompanied by a guttural ejaculation of which only Italians are masters.

"Annunciatina, come up here!"

sounded a clear voice directly over our heads; and a young girl with a gay kerchief about a wealth of dark locks, with white gown and bare feet worked her way through the vine-foliage, the tambourine still in her raised hand.

"Teresina, you cursed witch, how dare you come down into my vineyard; and more than that, dance the dance that Father Giuseppe has forbidden?" cried my worthy friend.

"I didn't dance it with you, you old fool!" cried Teresina, panting for breath. "If I'd had a thought of dancing it with you 'twould have been sin indeed."

"Disgusting wretch that you are," now came Annunciatina's voice, and another and younger maiden slipped through the vine leaves. "Go home to your poor wife, whom you beat every night: take care that your old father doesn't make a fool of himself, marrying a young wife, and that Mariuccia doesn't run off with Bep-pino: that's better than to be dawdling round here."

It was a fearful salvo, and I looked for a corresponding explosion. Pisani gasped once or twice for breath, then he turned to me, and while laughter and clang of tambourine resounded above, he said, in the persuasion that I had understood nothing: "Two nice, amiable girls, who are amusing themselves a little this fine evening."

"Yes, so it seems," I said,

Pisani felt somewhat depressed, and only when we again reached the highway had he regained his former dignity, but now we had also the *piazza* again in sight.

"You have never seen the *tarantella*?" he carelessly asked, as if nothing had occurred.

"No, never," I replied. "It is my highest ambition to see it,—of course well danced."

"Very well," said he, and pointed with his hand before him, "follow this little rocky path here to the right: it leads up the mountain and ends by the little white house you see up

yonder. Go in there, mention my name, and say that you wish to see the *tarantella*, and you will have the privilege of seeing it danced as no one else in the island can dance it. If you are not satisfied, let me know when you come back,—you will find me on the *piazza*,—and I will speak with the Merry Family."

"The Merry Family? Who are they?"

"They are the people who live up there. We always call them so. They sing, dance, and laugh from morning till night. Nothing can disturb their good-humour."

"But one cannot break into a strange house in that way and demand that the inmates should dance for his amusement. I do not know them. I am a stranger—"

"Just for that reason you can do it. Besides, if you refer to me it is all right. The sun does not set for an hour yet. We have a full moon this evening, so that you will easily find your way back. If not, then ask the man to come with you: he'll do it, if you mention my name."

With these words, Pisani, who had recovered his entire self-possession, turned his back upon me and sauntered slowly towards his beloved *piazza* and his vacant throne.

It is a peculiarity of the Italians that as a foreigner one may ask of them almost anything that is possible. Joyous and good-humoured by nature, courteous more by native impulse than by training, accustomed to the exactations and caprices of the traveller, they treat him almost like a spoiled child, to whom one must give way in everything. Should one send a messenger at nightfall to a Danish peasant's house with a request for Hans or Kunz to dance a reel or a hornpipe before the stranger he would probably be looked upon as mad and shown out of the house with scant ceremony: here such a proceeding is thought quite natural: the stranger child, who has travelled so far and pays so well, must of course be amused.

I will not say that these reflections occupied me while I was climbing the mountain: the ascent was too steep and the scenery about me too grand. The path, which at first had led between a couple of vineyards, now rose higher, and meandered over the rocks as if its zigzag lines had been laid out by one of those emerald-green lizards, which with their shrewd flashing eyes and sinuous movements whisked across before me in restless play. Gigantic black masses of rock, overgrown with white and yellow moss, and fractured surfaces glistening with the changing brilliancy of hornblende, rose over the way and forced the little path to turn to this side and that in the most capricious windings. Now came a little brook, now an abrupt descent; and one had to climb ever with strained attention, in order not to be precipitated into the valley, where already the round churchdomes, the snow-white houses and leafy balconies began to grow less, and to take on that look which they may have to the eagle as he passes on his soaring way beneath the clouds. I looked upward: the little white house lay directly over my head, framed with brightest and freshest green, but I was yet a long way from it. Suddenly the mountain path grew wider: it took on almost the rank of a highway, and with the rank changed also the character. Tall slender chestnuts waved their shade-giving leaves in the evening air, which came as a refreshing breeze from the dark blue sea far below. Gigantic ferns raised their smooth delicate fronds, and gay butterflies showed that up here, where the glow of the sun's rays was tempered by the mountain air, and the earth kept moist by mountain-springs—that here the flowers still bloomed which below in the valley had long since dried up and withered away. The air grew softer the higher I rose. The way widened now to a broad grassy level, where high chestnuts and mighty gnarled oaks at times fostered the illusion that I was walk-

ing through the groves of my northern home. Suddenly I saw before me a great yellow stubble-field, and heard dull regular blows like the sound of the flail in harvest time; and to my astonishment I soon stood before two half-naked men, who with a pair of long poles were threshing the new-mown rye, as it lay upon the ground before them.

"Does the Merry Family live here?" I asked with some hesitation.

"Higher up, at the next place, signore. You cannot miss it if you follow the hedge to the right."

The hedge was a confused mixture of ivy, honeysuckle, brambles, wild roses, and the prickly but beautiful liquorice plant, whose delicately veined oval leaves reminded me somewhat of the tropical creepers which are grown in our forcing-houses. Here a pair of mighty aloes hung over the way, there a gigantic fig-cactus, with its red fruits and thorny leaves, rose high in the air: there was something strangely tropical in the whole scene. Never did I see rose-bushes so heavy with blossoms, blackberries so large, and ivy so rank as here.

A walk of a few minutes led me to a little half-fallen wooden gate, which leaned against a stone post, in a niche of which had been set up an ill-painted picture of the Madonna. A fresh fragrant bouquet lay beneath the picture of the Virgin. The little gate was open and in the entrance a pointer, white and spotted with brown, stood and looked at me with his intelligent eyes.

"Does the Merry Family live here?" I asked.

The dog seemed to understand me, for he turned suddenly about and sprang, wagging his tail, before me down a pathway dark with the rank growth of the overhanging vines, as if he wished to announce that a stranger was coming. I stepped through the gateway, where the full round grape-clusters in their dark-brown glory hung down so thick and heavy that I almost touched them with

my head. As I went on the path widened, and ended beside a pair of spreading dense-shaded walnut-trees: right before these stood a little white house, with its flat roof and its inevitable leaf-covered porch, and within this last sat a young girl, stripping lavender leaves.

"Does the 'Merry Family' live here?" I asked for the third time.

"Yes, *signore*, we are they," replied she, without a trace of embarrassment. Then she rose and shook the fragrant leaves upon a white cloth. "I will go and call father."

She left the porch, and soon after I saw her vanish below in the vineyard. I had now leisure to look about me a little and study the surroundings before I brought forward my special purpose, the wished-for *tarantella*. There lay on this little spot of earth a wealth of beauty that really filled me with amazement. The vines were bound up partly to slender elms, partly to yellow canes, which were bent in round arches, so that they formed shady walks wherever one looked, and everywhere the heavy bunches peeped through the light leaves. Purple-red tomatoes hung from the low wooden trellis-work which inclosed the little garden-spot about the house: broad-leaved figs full of blood-red dewy fruits stood round about it. Tall rose-mallows raised their pyramids of blossoms in the corners of the garden: further on a fountain fell plashing from a grotto that was thickly over-grown with callas, maiden-hair, and ferns; while in the midst of this little paradise of flowers sounded the melodious note of the quail, mingled with the twittering trill which a solitary singing-bird still sent forth to the setting sun. I looked toward the house: the spotted pointer kept faithful watch upon the threshold and beside his head appeared a second, black-locked, dark-eyed. Then two little sun-burned arms and a pair of restless little legs came in view, and a little four-year-old maiden, one of the most captivating creatures that I

ever saw, let her great coal-black eyes rest inquiringly upon me : she had plainly never before seen a stranger.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Giovanina," she whispered, frightened, and ducked down behind the great pointer, who licked her face.

The evening-red glowed through the vineyard, playing among the heavy clusters, marking with flecks of golden sunlight the flowers of the daintily trimmed beds, flashing in the pearly drops of the fountain, and changing the trunks and branches of the great walnut-trees into sparkling bronze. So full and powerful was this golden illumination that it almost blinded me, and I did not observe the persons coming from the vineyard till they stood quite before me. Foremost came the young maiden of the porch ; next followed a tall, slender man in short leathern breeches and the usual red cap of the peasants of Ischia ; then came a finely formed older woman, with a peculiar steel-grey sheen in her dark hair ; and the procession was finally closed by a lad of fifteen years, who carried in one hand a quantity of springes and snares for catching quail, and a bag with the captured birds in the other.

The young girl, accompanied by the older woman whom I took for her sister, went into the house. The boy remained standing, and regarded me with a curious, half-wondering look, while the man returned my greeting with a scarcely perceptible touch of his cap. "Which way did you come up here?"

"By the footpath," I answered. "I am staying down below there in the valley in *La Piccola Sentinella* and had heard people talk of the Merry Family, so this afternoon I marched up here."

"Do you hear, wife?" he cried with a hearty laugh in at the open doorway. "Down below, in *La Piccola Sentinella* they talk of the Merry Family. In the hotel where all the fine people come they talk about the Merry Family up here on the mountain.

He is a *signore*, and yet he has come up here to see us : isn't that droll?" And he went on with so hearty, free and pleased a laugh that with regard to him I could not entertain the slightest doubt that he was the head of the family.

"There are not many, I suppose, who come up here!"

"No," he answered. "Yes, wait though, four years ago there was a French painter here. He painted the tree yonder and the waterfall over the ravine, and the valley by Casamicciola and the sea away over as far as Cap Misene."

He had placed himself beside one of the two great trees, and pointed with his hand in a wide circuit out over the stony ridge. I followed the movement of his hand and in truth it was a wonderful spectacle which lay spread out before my eyes. The rocky mountain sides here formed a ravine or gorge, where the chestnuts in dark-green leafy domes lost themselves in soft descent valley-ward. Then followed the valley, with its brighter foliage of vines, with the blue-grey olives, with the little white houses and the scattered vineyards. Thence the eye swept over the blinking sea, coloured of the deepest ultramarine, while out on the horizon glowed and flashed the sinking sun like a mighty ball of fire, half whose disk was already swallowed by the sea. To the left lay Ponza's lofty isle of rocks : Monte Circello and the promontory of Gaeta seemed like two twinkling stars; and then one saw Nicida, Cap Misene, and Posilippo, till at last Vesuvius, that primeval guardian of the gulf, with the dark plume of the column of smoke upon his helm and the violet cloud-mantle about his shoulders, closed the view on the right.

"You are beautifully situated here," I remarked.

"Beautifully?" he said, and laughed contentedly. "Yes, that is my opinion. So says my wife, too. At first it did not strike me as so beautiful, the ground was so unproductive, and

the labour so hard. But every evening, when we were through with our day's work, we sat ourselves down here under the walnut-trees, and then she would point out to me, one evening this, and another evening that, and now I can well see that it is beautiful here—beautiful as in Paradise, said the French painter, too."

The wife at these words had come out : she had laid her hand upon her husband's shoulder, and was looking with him out toward the sinking sun. A sunbeam lighted up her face, her lips moved softly. I was convinced that she was praying. She was finely made, and small, and had the delicate hands and feet which are found in so many women in Ischia. The bright-coloured kerchief was wound in many folds about her head, yet could not conceal that her dark hair had here and there begun to turn grey. But the eyes were still full of life and brilliancy: the smile indeed a little sad, but refined; and her movements light and quick and graceful. Yet there lay in her whole bearing something, I will not say subdued, but which gave the impression that the labour which life had laid upon her had been too great and heavy for her bodily strength.

"Filippo," she said to the boy, "bring the strange *signore* a chair. Are you not tired from the difficult climb? Will you not drink a glass of wine?"

I conceived that the wine might lead to the *tarantella* and accepted with thanks, and the remark that their wine, too, had been praised down in the valley.

"Praised?" cried the man. "Ay, I believe you: nowhere on the whole island will you find better wine than on Felicetto's little place. When the monks still lived up here in the convent on Epomeo they would never have any other wine than Felicetto's; and they are shrewd men, who know well what they drink."

He laughed again heartily, and rolled away a monstrous cask which

lay at the end of the garden-walk before the grotto, and closed the entrance to it. "Will you see my cellar?" he cried, out of the darkness within.

I stepped past the plashing little fountain to the grotto, which, after Italian fashion, was hewn in the soft volcanic tufa, but I fell involuntarily back, so cold a stream of air came out against me.

"Yes, it is the best cellar on the island," he said, taking up the long siphon. "So cold an air you probably never felt. I never dare bring Giovanna in here. She always wants to come with me, for she has a great fancy for the wine; but she always takes cold here."

"Here it is quite as cold as with us at home when the snow falls," I replied, and counted with a sort of wonder the casks whose rows were lost in the darkness. "We, too, have such grottoes in my home; but then we build them out of earth, and store in them the ice which the wintry frost spreads over sea and lakes."

He lowered the siphon, and asked in wonder: "From what country in the world are you then, that it is so cold there?"

"From a little country high up in the north, called Denmark."

"Then have you no wine there?"

"No, neither wine nor grapes; neither oranges, citrons, almonds, nor paradise-apples."

"But what do you grow, then? What do you live on?"

I felt my Danish nature stir within me, and said, with the sober feeling of home-sickness: "On rye—on the same grain that I saw them threshing below there. We bake bread of it."

"Good heavens! Poor creature!" said he, "that we give to our asses when they have foals. Do you hear, wife," he cried, as he came out with a can of golden-yellow pearling wine; "do you hear? the *signore* has lived on rye: they have nothing else but rye there where he comes from. He is from Denmark."

"Poor man!" said she with the deepest earnestness, and held out the glass, into which her husband let glide the sparkling stream. "He looks right sturdy, nevertheless."

I grasped the full glass and put it to my lips. It was a glorious wine, light and sparkling, like the North-Italian Asti, and yet uniting the aroma of the Asti with all the fire and strength of the Falernian. As I drank I saw the man cast a significant glance towards his wife, and observed that they exchanged a word or two."

"We take our supper presently," she began with a degree of embarrassment, "but I don't know whether you would wish to share so simple fare. We have only a maize *polenta* and the quail which Filippo has caught—yes, and then we have fruits," she added.

In her modest invitation there was something exceedingly friendly, and yet I could not divest myself of the feeling that it was bestowed upon me more especially because she knew that at home I lived as poorly as the donkeys in her country: it was plain that that had given her courage. I wished to astonish them yet more, and therefore said: "In my home we have butterflies always. In summer they are bright-coloured, and flutter from flower to flower, as here; but when winter comes they lose their splendour, they become glistening white, and vanish like dew between one's fingers, if we only touch them. In summer-time we have the blue glancing sea, as here, but in winter, when the north wind sweeps over it, it becomes hard and transparent like glass. Then all the running water in the brooks and fountains stiffens—aye, even the rain hangs in crystal tears of glass from the trees. Then we bind under our feet wooden shoes, beneath which a knife-blade is fastened, and we can glide over the glassy surface so swiftly that a bird can hardly follow us."

The man gazed at me in wonder, as
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if I were telling tales out of another world: the daughter, too, who had come out and stood leaning against the door-post in the open porch, let her beautiful eyes rest inquiringly upon me with an uncertain expression. But the woman looked up and said: "The *signore* speaks the truth. In Denmark the white snow falls like little butterflies, and the ice lies like a mirror far and wide upon the waters, and men and horses go upon it."

"She is right," said Felicetto, as he presently afterward went down with me into the vineyard, while wife and daughter prepared the evening meal. "She knows a great deal—much more than I. She was for some time with a Danish family in Naples: there she learned much. She has never forgotten the Danes: they must be good people."

We had come to a steep slope of the vineyard where the sun in the forenoon must glow with a burning heat, for the air was still moist and warm as in a hot-house, and from the neighbouring tufa rocks the heat radiated as from an oven. The little mountain-spring which came down from above here already flowed along as a tiny brook, and with great care was its water conducted through a multitude of slender channels, so that the earth looked almost like the divided squares of a chess-board. On each of these little squares, which formed a bed by itself, rioted a profusion of gigantic dark-green leaves, whose veins glistened like gold; while from beneath this tropical wealth of foliage peeped forth great yellow fruits, whose nature, however, on account of the rank leaf-growth, I could not discover.

"What fruits are these?" I asked.

"*Monacellos*," he answered.

"*Monacellos*?" I repeated in astonishment. "That is a remarkable name. *Monacellos* I thought were the fugitive spirits, who hide themselves in the hollows of the rocks and only come out when the full moon shines, and, as the capricious humour seizes them,

now lead the wanderer astray, now reveal to him the course of the metallic veins in the hard rock, or show him hidden treasures that were buried by races that vanished long ago."

"Then you know, too, about the *monacellos*?" he said, regarding me with a scrutinising look. "Take hold of this, *signore*, then you will see that it is no spirit."

He had raised one of the long trailing vines, and now laid a great, heavy, gold-glancing fruit in my hands. It had a wonderfully rich and delicate aroma, almost like a blending of the perfume of roses and strawberries, but otherwise might at first sight be thought perhaps something half-way between melon and cucumber. Its rind was covered in all directions with a network of delicately-traced veins, and perhaps it was the play of the evening sun upon these that lent it a sheen, like gold. The shape, too, was remarkable, and although the cucumber family is apt to take the most extraordinary forms, yet I had never before seen this. The fruit had on its upper side a contraction, so that a round head, as it were, sat upon a narrow neck; then it spread out like a trunk, and ended in two projecting knobs. With but moderate fancy one might readily imagine it a little fat-paunched man taking his rest under the shady leaves.

"It shines like gold," I said, "and how heavy it is! Such fruits I have never seen here on the island. We have never got hold of them in *La Piccola Sentinella*, and yet there they have good fruit."

"No, that I readily believe," he laughed. "If one only buys peaches and Japanese medlars for the strangers they are well satisfied. They understand neither wine nor fruits as do the Neapolitans. The worst is always good enough for the English, say the hotel-keepers. Besides, they do not care to pay a ducat a pound for such fruit when other sorts are to be had for a couple of *bajocchi*.

No, these all go straight to Naples. There, there is a fruit-dealer in the market who sells nothing else."

He laid the noble fruit again carefully in its place, but suddenly another thought seemed to strike him, and he bent down again over the bed: "We will eat one this evening," he said, and drew his broad pruning-knife from his girdle. "In general we never eat them ourselves, but to-night it shall be a feast."

"It is much too large," I cried, and drew back his arm.

"Do you think so?" he asked, with a sly look. "Wait till you taste it."

Beneath the two great walnut-trees our table had been spread—one of those great broad tubs which are used in the vintage, turned bottom-upward. The leaves of the vine and fig were our table-cloth, and on them lay the many-coloured products of the harvest, while in the midst steamed a great platter of the yellow maize *polenta* with red tomatoes. For our lamp, there was the moon, which, large and bright, but yet with a light wreath of cloud about its brow, sent down single glistening rays through the dark green foliage of the walnut.

The whole family were gathered about the little table where they had taken their places upon low three-legged wooden stools. For me a rush-bottomed chair had been set, the only one in the house; but inasmuch as it raised me at a majestic, indeed, but very inconvenient, height above the rustic table, I gave it up to a great brown-striped cat, who from thence with greedy eyes gloated upon the roasted quail which stood beside the polenta. I myself, in spite of many objections, rolled an empty keg to the table, and seated myself between the mother and the young maiden: the little Giovannina and the young bird-catcher sat opposite to me: an empty stool waited for Felicetto, who had gone into the house, apparently to prepare the golden fruit, as he came back bearing it in his hand on a great

burdock-leaf. I could plainly perceive that this was a highly unusual event for the whole family. Filippo wiped his lips, Giovanna uttered a cry of joy, which elicited from the spotted pointer a short yelp, and the elder daughter smiled—a most charming quiet smile. At the same moment the church-bells in the valley sounded for the *Ave Maria*: the man took off his red cap, the children bowed their heads, the wife silently cut the luscious fruit—she had performed her devotions as the sun sank into the sea.

During the short pause of silence my thoughts flew instinctively back to my rude native land. I could not but think of a Danish peasant-family in their small and musty room, taking their evening meal of buckwheat groats or sour milk with a slice of black bread, while the rain drips from the straw-thatch and the north-west wind howls through the chimney, and in my feeling of the difference I broke out involuntarily with the words—“They call you down below in the valley the Merry Family: they ought to say the Happy: never have I seen on so little a spot of earth more happiness than here.”

The wife sent a glance of assent, the daughter smiled yet more quietly than before, but the man burst out laughingly—“Happiness!—call you this happiness? Look about you and tell me whether you ever saw an unhappier man than I? Three children who do nothing but eat, a wife who wastes everything, and a vineyard I must take care of alone: call you that happiness? Aye, perhaps all that might pass; but the unhappiest thing for a man is to be married to such a wife. Look how homely she is, and how old: there are more grey hairs already than black.”

She answered nothing to this attack upon a point on which in general the women of the south are so sensitive; but she put her fork with a hasty movement into the quail which lay upon her plate, and gave it to

Giovanna, who at once busied herself with it.

“Do you see? That is the way I am treated,” said Felicetto to me with a flashing look: “tyrannised over by my wife, sucked dry by the municipality that takes a third of my income in taxes, plagued by the commune, tormented by priests and customs officers, and that you call a happy man! If I had known it all beforehand, I wouldn’t have run off with her.”

“Did you run away with your wife?” I asked.

“Yes, I ran away with her from Naples,” he replied, without the slightest indication that there was anything unusual in the announcement. “She was——” He could not finish the sentence: his wife had risen, and while with her right hand she stopped his mouth, with the left she hung about his shoulders his brown jacket, for the evening dew began to fall.

“Yes, it is now so long ago that it is not worth while to speak of it,” said he. “When I look at Annina there, I am reminded that I begin to be an old man.”

“Is that your daughter?” I cried, “Annina? That name we have with us, too, at home.”

“Does it please you?” asked the wife with animation. “She received it in remembrance of the Danish lady with whom I served: she was such a good *signora*.”

The young girl had blushed over and over thus to have become the central point of the conversation. She was finely made as the mother, though far fuller, and from her open, childlike countenance beamed a rich innocent joy in existence; but lively as her mother she was not.

“You are betrothed!” I asked.

“Yes,” she answered, blushing yet more deeply, and hiding under the table the hand which had betrayed her.

“To whom?”

“To a sailor,” she answered softly.

“Take care,” said I, perhaps with unconscious jealousy: “sailors are

faithless. We have a Danish song, which says they have a love in every harbour, and never come a second time to any."

"But he will come, that I know for certain," said she with quiet feeling; "and when he comes I shall be his wife."

I regretted what I had said, but Filippo, confirming the proverb which says that all brothers know how to wound their sisters in the tenderest spot, said dryly: "It was well that he got off at Lissa."

Annina became quite colourless at these words. Her quiet eyes flashed, and with quivering voice she replied: "Gennaro was not to blame for the mishap at Lissa. He did not command the vessel, and when she sank he did well to leap overboard and be saved like the rest."

"I would have stayed," said Filippo. "No Austrian should have drawn me out of the water to thrust me into prison."

From the eyes of the boy flashed a defiant decision which lent him an expression of beauty. The sister rose, and went into the house. For the first time in Italy I realised that among the people, too, Lissa is an occasion for mourning, a rankling thorn, like Eckenford with us Danes.

The mother followed the daughter into the house. The father was silent for a moment, then he said: "Lie first in the water, friend, with the gulls above and the fishes beneath you: then you can speak."

A little pause succeeded, which Felicetto employed in filling our glasses. Soon afterward mother and daughter came back again, but Annina's eyes were still moist with tears.

"Now taste this, *signore*," said Felicetto, and reached me on the point of his knife a piece of the golden fruit which till now had lain untouched on the table. "How does it taste to you?"

"That is surely a pine-apple," cried I: "at least it tastes so."

"Yes, so they say, too, in Naples," he remarked, with a laugh; "and yet it is only a plain melon, but a melon out of Felicetto's vineyard: no other yields such fruit."

"But where did it get the strange name of *monacello*?" I asked. "That means, certainly, a little monk, one of the spirits that carry on their pranks around Sorrento."

Felicetto's smiling countenance took on a more serious expression. "I could tell you something of that," said he, in a low tone, but at the same moment his wife touched his elbow and he was silent.

The great slices of the fragrant fruit which made their way about the table and disappeared with wonderful rapidity, the glorious wine, and the soft moonlight which played brighter and brighter down through the leaves, and in whose sheen herbs, shrubs, and flowers seemed to diffuse a perfume twice as delicious as at other times—all this brought about a festive mood in which the little dissonance was soon lost and forgotten. The wine and the sweet air called up enchanting visions. I understood now how it had fared with Ulysses, when he visited the enchanted gardens of Circe, and in her society forgot his faithful Penelope and the storm-beaten Ithaca. A couple of glasses more and I felt the most brotherly goodwill for all mankind: all seemed to me brothers and sisters, and why should one feel any hesitation in asking such if they could dance the *tarantella*.

"Do you hear, wife?" said Felicetto, and raised his glass. "He thinks, perhaps, we cannot dance the *tarantella*. Perhaps he believes us too old. Filippo, bring out the guitar; and you, Annina, take the tambourine that lies under the bed, and we'll make a trial at all events."

It seemed as if the word *tarantella* had touched all with an electric spark. Filippo and Annina hastened into the house to fetch the instruments. Felicetto and his brisk little wife in the turn of a hand cleared

away the remnants of the meal : even Giovanna tripped off with a wine-glass, whose contents she had half emptied ere her mother had time to take it from her.

II.

A medieval legend relates that the *tarantella* was played for the first time by a monk, who for the sake of a young maiden had sold himself to the devil, and with his help had seduced the entire holy brotherhood. This much at least we know, that at one period in the Middle Ages these strange melodies took hold of the population of Southern Italy with a power that certainly seemed demoniacal. Children danced in the cradle, old men on the brink of the grave, the sick had to be bound to their couches, women forsook husbands and parents to roam through the land with the reeling bands that played the *tarantella* from city to city. Even within the sacred walls of the cloister the peace was disturbed, and monks and nuns were carried away by the intoxicating dance. Stately councillors and honourable burgomasters swung their legs with such vigour that the holy father in Rome was obliged to bring ban and interdict to bear against the seductive demons. But they still live. Satan's brood are not so easily put to rout ; and when these tones ring exultant through the moonlit night, it is as if fire flashed through the blood : one cannot sit still : even the stiff and serious Englishman hitches uneasily about on his chair and moves his thin grey legs.

And then this marvellous dexterity in eliciting ravishing sounds from the instruments. Each man and woman is a born *virtuoso*. The tambourine seems to have been their plaything in the very cradle. Anna's fingers, that were so tender and small, whisked over the surface of the tambourine like the *libellula* that sports in the sunshine of a summer's day, and whose wings the eye cannot

follow. Filippo's hand glanced over the strings like the shining silver-fish that dart from stone to stone : never did he strike a false note, never did he look down upon his instrument : his eyes followed a pair of great bats, which, startled by the noise, fluttered in irregular circles above our heads.

Felicetto and his wife took their places on the little level space beneath the walnut-trees. He raised both his arms, she with the fingers of each hand took hold of her dress : a vigorous stroke of the tambourine, both saluting bent themselves towards each other, wheeled once about, stood with raised arms on the tips of their toes — and the *tarantella* began.

Describe it ? Impossible ! Who can depict the play of the butterflies in the warm sunny air, when, filled with the longing of life and love, they hover in pairs over the flowers ? Who will delineate the circling flight of the swallows, when at the evening hour they flutter twittering about the nest that shelters their young ? Who will catch the movement of the waves when in still summer-nights they roll in between the rocks, and with light murmur in swaying plash form their quickly dissolving eddies ? Who can describe what is distinctive in the smile of the lips, in the glance of the eye, in the play of the features that is so delicate the eye hardly catches it ? The *tarantella* can be danced, it can be seen, but to describe or to paint it — no, that is impossible.

The *tarantella* is improvisation : it is a romance of Terpsichore, narrated by two who love each other. It can also be set forth by two who do not love each other : then it becomes comic, burlesque, the love-dream turns into a farce. As Felicetto and his wife danced it there could be no doubt as to the category. As the bee that hovers about the tender blossom of the linden whose intoxicating perfume attracts it, so did his look hang true and inquiring on hers, which in turn smiled with deep inward tenderness. Out of every swaying bending move-

ment Eros peeped forth ; but the stronger the rustle of the wings of the god—and in the clang of the tambourine one felt their mighty fanning—so much the more she drew back, so much the more her downcast look sought the earth : she bent her head and while, light as a Psyche, she hovered poised on the delicate little foot, she seemed to me in attitude, in the folds of her dress, in the graceful bend of her head, so like Thorwaldsen's dancer, that I was fairly startled, Felicetto made a wide sweep about her, raised his arms, and sang :

" Darling, O tell me where art thou ?
I hoisted my sail
Over light-leaping keel ;
I flew o'er the sea, as by night flies the gull,
As the storm-petrel flies from the tempest ;
Yet the sea was a desert—I saw thee not
there ! "

She answered :

" Hoist not thy sail
Over light-leaping keel,
Thy darling is not on the ocean."

He rattled his castanets once or twice and went on :

" My darling, O tell me where art thou ?
In dim purple grot,
By whispering wavelet,
Sought I thee till thick darkness came down.
The stone, it was moist as my eye with tears ;
O darling, I found thee not there."

She answered :

" Stay not to search
By whispering wave !
Thy darling is not by the sea-shore."

He went on :

" Darling, O tell me where art thou ?
I mounted the rock,
As the goat climbs the alp ;
I hung as the swallow hangs poised o'er the gulf,
As the ivy that clings to the cliff side ;
Yet the rock was barren, I saw thee not there."

She answered again :

" Oh, scale not the rock,
As the goat climbs the alp ;
Thy darling is not on the mountain."

Again he swung the castanets and sang :

" Darling, O tell me where art thou ?
In the dim-lighted wood
I searched every nook,
As the bee that stays at each blossom and leaf,
As the ant that examines each straw ;
Yet the wood it was empty, I found thee not there."

She answered as before :

" Search not the shades
Of the dim-lighted wood ;
Thy darling is not in the forest."

His movements, during the whole course of this interchange, whose cadence and rhythmical turns have been but feebly reproduced, had an entreating, supplicating character. Now movement as well as melody became livelier, their rhythm changed : he hovered about her in narrower and ever narrower circles, while he sang :

" Oh, then thou art fled
From the island, O love,
As the swallow departeth in harvest.
Who can follow her flight
In the trailing clouds ?
O darling, who followeth thee ?"

She answered softly and with shame-faced look :

" With the swallows fly thou
To the brawling town,
There dwelleth thy love, like the swallow."

Then his gestures became threatening, and he sang with raised voice :

" I whet now the steel,
I hoist the broad sail
For flight o'er the dark-crested sea.
I bear thee away
From the brawls of the town ;
O darling, in brawling is death."

With lowered voice came her answer :

" In brawling is death,
In the dungeon is woe,
And hate in the heart of mankind ;
She yearneth, she pineth, thy darling !"

He bent down over her, let both castanets clatter loud over her head, and sang :

" Now death be to grief,
And to longing an end,
But joy to the heart that endures.
We will fly to our home
By the light of the stars,
O darling, when midnight draws near."

She gave him a look full of glowing love :

" I slumber no more,
I dream not again,
My soul is become all ear,
I listen, I wait, my beloved."

Again he sang :

" Now is midnight come,
Now bright glow the stars,
And island-ward leapteth our keel.
See where loom the jagged cliffs
Over foam-whitened strand
From the mist of the morning, beloved."

She slipped through beneath his arms, and as she bent toward him, came the words :

" As the sun, so mount
Now my hopes on high.
Lo, our vines on the steep mountain side !
I tremble with joy, O beloved."

A vigorous sweep of all the strings of the guitar, a stroke of the tambourine, whose quivering vibrations rose high over all the previous whirl, and the dance was at an end. Ere I had quite recovered myself, Felicetto had the guitar upon his arm, his wife seized the tambourine, and Filippo and Annina stepped forward.

The dance began in the same manner as before, a bow of salutation, a quick whirl, and the music struck up. But how different was this *tarantella* from the first. Annina seemed not to have forgotten the reference to Gennaro. Calm, measured, cold, she moved in short alternating springs upon her dainty feet, but always on the same spot. Filippo swept in great circles, with a shamelessly absent-minded mien about her. Suddenly she made a movement quick as lightning toward him, drew back again, and danced as before. His circles became narrower, his look more interested, and with admirably pantomimic gesture and play of feature he gave the spectators to understand that she was really quite beautiful and that it was well worth one's while to pay court to her. He approaches, but she frigidly draws back : he makes a movement as if to seize her, but she turns her back upon him and dances, as it seems, profoundly absorbed in

her own thoughts. Then Filippo's features assume an expression of deeply comic despair. He whirls about her, but with uncertain steps and tottering carriage, as if he could hardly hold himself upright for grief at her coldness. Then he fawns about her, half dropping on one knee, with most supplicating gestures ; but as she maintains her icy coldness, and as the most submissive and entreating attitudes can win no smile from her, suddenly he is seized with all the pangs of jealousy. Then he descrees another young maiden, she is favourable to him, she smiles upon him, and with a spring he leaves the magic circle, while Annina, startled and with looks of wonder, gazes after him.

Such, perhaps, was the purport of the little idyl; but, again I say, it is not to be described : one gets instead of the living work of art only a ballet-programme. Certainly more than fifty times since then have I seen the *tarantella* danced in Ischia, at Sorrento, at Capri, but never have I heard a laugh so from the heart as here. Aye, when a fortnight later I took a fellow-countryman up with me, once more to loiter among these joyous children of Nature and live over again in memory the vanished hours, all appeared to me tame in comparison with what I had seen on that day. The inspiration was wanting : we were constrained because—we were constrained, and wore spectacles.

Meanwhile it had grown darker : the full disk of the moon began to decline toward the sea : the last note of the quail had long since died away in the wood ; and only the shrill chirp of the cicada sounded like a chorus of flageolets in the still warmth of the summer-night. It was time to break up, and again to seek out the unfamiliar rocky path and the dark zigzag descents ere the moon sank so low that it became impossible. I offered Felicetto a cigar in parting, and as I handed him the case bade him keep it as a memento of Denmark.

He looked at it with open eyes, pushed it gently back with his hand, and said, laughing: "No, that I cannot possibly accept, it is much too costly a gift for me, and you will miss it."

"I will get myself another in Naples," said I. He hesitated a moment longer and cast a look toward his wife, which seemed plainly to say: "May I?" My eye met hers, she gave me a friendly and grateful glance and nodded to her husband. He took the cigar case, opened it and gazed at it with an undisguised joy, like a child that receives a new plaything. Then he laid it carefully in his red woollen cap, and cried out, "What a *signore!*! Such a cigar case from Denmark I've all my life longed for. I've seen them lying in the show-windows of the great shops in Naples, but I could never pay so high a price for them. What eyes they will make on the *piazza* when I come down on Sunday!"

One more glass of wine I had to empty as I took leave of these people, who are like a mirror of the laughing joyous Nature amid which they are born. Felicetto threw his jacket about his shoulders, whistled to the pointer, and while his wife with the small Giovannina on her arm accompanied us to the little gate, I sent a last farewell greeting to the quiet Annina, to the lively Filippo, to the peaceful white house and to the Madonna with the fragrant flowers.

The moonlight down here in the south has a strangely dazzling and misleading effect. It is so still, so cold, so clear, that one fancies he can see everything to the smallest detail; but he soon discovers that the distances are illusive, that outlines have only an apparent solidity, that the path which the eye follows yonder is only a moonbeam between the tree-stems, and that the little lake which blinks below in the ravine is nothing but the bare rock, whose flakes of mica sparkle in the rays of the moon. We had accordingly advanced but a short distance into the wood, when Felicetto grasped my arm and cried,

"To the left, *signore!* The way to the right there is not good: it leads through the Dead Valley."

"That is a name I never heard."

"And a stranger, too, never goes there. The way is bad, and the donkey-drivers do not like to pass through it, especially in the evening. There are many places here which travellers never get sight of. They ride whenever the donkey-drivers take them, and these, as I said, never go there."

The romantic name, the Dead Valley, had at first caught my attention. Felicetto's words changed attention into curiosity. "Let us go there," said I.

"Can you climb well, *signore?* "

"Tolerably well."

"And are not afraid?"

"Not in the least. I have ascended Epomeo on the steep side. I am not subject to dizziness."

"No, that I did not mean," said Felicetto, with a long look toward the valley.

"No? What then?"

"Ah, they say so many things here on the island. But no matter, let us go, there are two of us."

Felicetto turned to the right and then struck into a narrow path. I followed him, but he spoke now no word. After some distance he suddenly stopped beside two mighty masses of rock which had rolled down from above, and between which the path wound as through a gigantic natural gateway.

"Now carefully, *signore!*" said he, and plunged down into the darkness.

I followed him, and as I felt my way forward with my hands I observed that the two halves of the rock belonged to each other; that it was not two blocks which had rolled down, but one monstrous mass which the might of the giants had burst asunder. Before me shone a bright ray of moonlight, like a star in the darkness: suddenly it was obscured and I experienced a feeling as if the rocks might close and I myself be converted into a sort of fossil insect.

"Your hand, *signore!*" I heard Felicetto's voice say close beside me. "So! now the ground rises. Stoop a little."

Again glimmered the star which Felicetto's hand had eclipsed: a couple of steps, we crept out of a narrow opening and now stood on the brink of a sheer descent, whose depth it was impossible to calculate.

"This is the Dead Valley," said Felicetto, pointing down with his hand.

Had he said, "This is the dwelling-place of death," it would not have surprised me. Before me the earth sank away like a huge dark cauldron, at whose bottom even the bright moonlight was changed into darkness. No tree, no bush, no flower was to be discerned there: it was as if life and death were severed by a sharp boundary line, and on this border we stood. At our feet, broom, myrtle, ferns, and tall torchweed in wild profusion: below, black formless masses of rock, full of rents, fissures and cavernous recesses, pitched hither and thither, piled up on each other, steeply overhanging as if ready to fall, torn, splintered, jagged and angular; as if one of the craters of the moon had suddenly emptied its contents on the earth, and the latter had not yet had time to reduce the chaotic masses to order.

"People say so many things here on the island," thought I, as, led by Felicetto's shadow, I began the descent. And in truth, if there are spirits of darkness who make their sport of mankind, they must choose this spot for their abiding-place.

"Pat! pat! pat!" sounded close beside me. "Pat, pat!" echoed from a gigantic lava block on the other side and directly over my head.

"What is that?" cried I to Felicetto, and stopped short. "Yonder is certainly some one calling to us."

"It is only the lava-hens," replied Felicetto. "They roost everywhere in the crevices of rocks: they don't care where."

At this moment a shrill alarm-clock went off close at hand between the rocks. I started aside, but Felicetto reassured me by laughingly naming some other nocturnal bird or beast, and we went on. By a peculiar combination of gliding, rolling, walking, and sliding, in the course of which I lost all that could properly be called dignity or decorum, I reached the bottom in a condition as if I had been in a Russian vapour-bath.

"Rest awhile on this stone, *signore!*" said Felicetto. "We have still some distance to go through the gorge, but then we shall be already close by Casamicciola."

"Can one drink this water?" I asked, and pointed to a little spring whose water ran by close before us.

Felicetto smiled again, and picked up a broken twig which lay beneath one of the lava blocks. He took his knife, sharpened the twig, and then thrust it with all his force into the earth. As he drew it out again, a little jet of water spouted out of the hole and a white vapour hovered like a mantle about it. I bent down—the water was scalding hot.

A strange feeling seized me. We are so accustomed to regard mother earth as our steadfast possession, to which we can trust ourselves with security. We have, to be sure, heard it said that this earth in its interior seethes and ferments, that monstrous masses of fire glow in its depths; but these accounts pass by us like idle tales or fantastic dreams. Now, however, all seemed changed. Humboldt's words, "The rind of the earth corresponds to the shell of the egg, the internal fires to the fluid contents of the egg," acquired such a living force, that I already saw this shell bursting and the glowing lava rushing forth through the rents. Who could tell how thick it might be on the very spot where we stood?

"It is a pity we haven't any eggs with us, else we might cook them here," said Felicetto, and went on stirring the stick about in the hole, so

that the white vapours rolled forth in waves. I broke out laughing at the extremely different ways in which our thoughts had busied themselves with the same subject. Confidence returned on the instant : such power has the ludicrous to overcome the terrible.

"Tell me, Felicetto," I asked, "how did it happen that you ran away with your wife?"

"I could not get her in any other way," he replied, and bored the stick into the earth, so that new columns of steam rose about us.

"Tell me something more about it : it interests me."

"Ay, that is another matter," said Felicetto, and put the cigar-case, which he had taken out, back into his cap. "I didn't suppose such trifles could be entertaining."

Naive Felicetto! How untouched by the artificial refinements of our civilisation! An elopement was for you a very simple, every-day affair.

"My wife is from Lacco, down below there," he began, seeming somewhat at a loss to find his words. "She is called Restituta, like the patron saint of Ischia, whose church, too, stands down below. I, however, am from Casamicciola, and when we came to know each other I was a donkey-driver."

"A donkey-driver!" I interrupted him, and called to mind the words of a friend who had travelled much in Italy, and who always maintained that the priests and the donkey-drivers were the greatest of Don Juans.

"Yes, donkey-driver," he repeated, smiling. "That isn't much, and it went right hard with me in those days. My comrades called me *la pecora*, because I hadn't any house and garden like the rest, but had to sleep in the open field or in an ass's stall, and yet I was thinking of marrying the prettiest girl in Lacco, for that she was, *signore*. But my earnings were small : it is no longer now as it used to be. Once one could earn a *lira* and a half every day, now the

strangers travel by the red hand-books and haggle about a *bajocco*. I myself had to hire a donkey of some one else and pay a *lira* a day for it, and the saddle cost me five *bajocchi*, so you can easily see there was not very much left."

So far Felicetto had got, and seemed about to initiate me in all the mysteries of the donkey-driver's craft, when he suddenly checked himself, and gazed with straining eyes toward the black shadow which one of the fallen blocks of lava cast across the bottom of the burnt-out crater.

"What is it?" I asked.

He made no answer, but continued to stare so fixedly toward the same spot that I began to fear some serious danger was at hand.

"Is it robbers, Felicetto?" I asked, and grasped his arm.

"No, no—Holy Virgin, help us! If it was only that! Look, yonder, half way up the rock : it is coming down to us!" he whispered in terror.

My eyes followed his, and I really thought I could make out, up on the rock, a little brown man standing there, with a monstrous hat on his head, nodding to us. Just then a single cicada uttered a shrill chirp and ceased again as abruptly, as if frightened at its own note, so that the sudden stillness after the sound made the silence yet more uncanny. All at once the little man sprang with a leap down from the rock, and we could plainly hear the stones rattle ; but it seemed to me that he fell and remained lying in the black ashes.

"Now he is gone," said Felicetto in a perceptibly relieved tone. "Come, *signore*, let us go. It is not good to loiter in these places in the night time."

I had in Sorrento, as well as on Ischia, heard of an apparition which they called *monacello*, and described now as a little man with a miner's lantern in his hand, now, as the name indeed indicated, as a little monk with a broad-brimmed hat on his head ; but I had never been able to learn any-

thing satisfactory about it. Now this occurred to me again, and I asked, "Was it a *monacello*?"

Felicetto made a sign of the cross that might have served for two, and answered not a word. We walked forward toward a cleft that opened in one side of the crater basin. Suddenly we heard a plaintive bleating. Felicetto did not turn about, but I looked back. Out there in the moonlight stood, clear and distinct, a young kid. About its neck it wore a broken cord: between its horns had become entangled a quantity of dry brambles and ivy-runners, which stood out in wild confusion in all directions. The creature seemed to have lost its way, and bleated again pitifully.

"It is a goat that has strayed," said I. "Oughtn't we to take it with us, Felicetto? Here it must perish: there isn't a blade of grass or a drop of water near here."

"Let it!" said Felicetto, and walked on.

The beast bleated again lamentably, and it seemed as if there lay a human despair in its voice.

"Felicetto," said I, "you ran away with your wife and are you afraid of a goat?"

"It is sent by the *monacello* to beguile us," he replied. "If we try to catch it, it will run away to fool us till we tumble into some hole or spring. I know their ways."

For the third time it bleated, and its voice sounded almost like a cry.

"Now I am going to catch it," said I, and turned about.

"The path leads over yonder by the cleft," said Felicetto, without looking back. "I will wait beside the great stone."

Hardly had I turned about when the beast, too, wheeled, and with short springs hopped away. I ran after it, but in its fright at seeing itself pursued it ran all the faster over ground where I could go but slowly. Then I bethought me of a manœuvre, of which I had seen the shepherds in the Campagna avail themselves. I seized one

of the stones with which the earth was thickly bestrewn, and threw it so that it fell directly before the kid. It stood still, frightened, and two minutes later I brought it in triumph to Felicetto, who was waiting for me at the entrance to the cleft. He stood up, and looked doubtfully first at me and then at the goat.

"Now," asked I, "who was right?"

Felicetto went on gazing at the creature, then he said: "What a fool a man may be, *signore!* It is my own goat, that ran away from me the day before yesterday."

I laughed at his surprise, and slowly we walked down the moonlit gorge, where the friendly Casamicciola smiled upon us from amid its gardens and vineyards. When we came upon the high-road, where the five black crosses stand and where seats are hewn in the rock before the Madonna, he knelt down and said a prayer. Then he took the cigar-case out of his cap, and said: "This you must take back."

"What for?" I asked in surprise.

"Because I am ashamed that up yonder I ran away from you like a little child, and that you rewarded me by finding my goat again. That I shall never forgive myself."

I opened the case and took out a cigar. "You shall give me this as a penalty," said I. "And further, you shall tell me all you know of the *monacello* as if I were your father confessor, else I shall not forgive you."

He sat himself down by me on the bench and began.

"In old days there were no *monacellos* in Ischia. The monks led an upright and God-fearing life. There were many convents here, but the greatest of all was San Nicolo, that which you have seen over yonder on Epomeo, where now only a single monk remains."

"He whom they call the Hermit?"

"The same: he is, however, a rascally fellow, who fleeces strangers and makes himself boozy with the money. That I often had occasion to

know as a donkey-driver. He will become a *monacello* when he dies."

"The *monacellos*, then, are the spirits of godless monks?"

"Yes, *signore*; when a monk dies he either goes direct to Paradise, if he has lived according to the rules of his order, or becomes a saint, if he has done more than these require. But those who have transgressed the laws of the convent find no rest. They shrivel together in their coffins, and when these can no longer retain them they wander about in rocks and caves and hollow places. There they must go on in the same evil courses which they followed in their lifetime, and when the full moon shines they carry on their pranks through the whole night. Then it is open to them to do good or evil to mankind, as they please. For every good deed they do, one of their sins is blotted out; and when they have painfully erased them all they themselves vanish away like a breath, and ascend, when the morning comes, to the ranks of the blessed. But there are others who even after death are so hardened in their evil ways they they will do nothing good. It makes them sport to fool mankind, to plague and torment them; but for every evil deed they do they shrivel more and more together, till at last they are no bigger than ants. These last are the worst of all, because one cannot be safe from them anywhere. They creep by night through the key-holes of the doors: they change children in the cradle, and mumble incantations over mothers so that they can have no more babies: they let loose the asses in their stalls and ride off on them like a whirlwind; and they entice cattle down into ravines out of which we can never get them up again. In old times there were none of these sprites; but now we have them all over the island, and this was the way it came about. One night there raged a fearful storm, so that down by Lacco the waves dashed high over the rock we call the Mushroom. That they've never done since, and it's

now many hundred years ago that this happened. In the midst of the storm the fishermen saw a boat coming from far out on the sea, and gliding over the waves as light as if it had been a swan's feather. It carried neither sail nor rudder, and could, indeed, in such a tempest have made no use of them. None the less did it bear straight for the Mushroom, like a cabriolet rolling through the streets of Naples. When it came to the rock all the fishermen thought now it must be dashed in pieces, but at the same instant came a monstrous wave, lifted it clear over the Mushroom, and landed it high and dry on the *piazza* in Lacco. In the boat sat a fat monk in a brown cloak, and to the great amazement of the fishermen he was as dry as if he had been walking the highway on a July day: some even assert that his feet were dusty. The first thing he asked for was a can of wine, and that they gave him forthwith. But as he drank the wine he did not make the sign of the cross over it, but dipped his fore and little fingers in it as if he were exorcising the Evil One, so that many wondered at it. All, however, were agreed that he must be a very holy man to have escaped the storm in such a fashion, and on the next day he was taken up by the abbot to San Nicolo on Mount Epomeo. From that day forward the monks brought their wine from the valley below, for the holy brother, as they called him, understood the art of turning water into wine, as Christ once did in Cana. Ever since that time the Epomeo wine has become so famous that strangers drink it to this day, though it is the vilest stuff in the world. Yet it is said that certain holy sisters here on the island still have some wine from that time, though it is very hard to be come at. Soon after the monk had come here the abbot died, and then the holy brother was chosen abbot in his place. But now it soon appeared whence he came. Such carousing and rioting went on up there in the convent that

the drinking songs of the monks could be heard down in the valley. There was no longer any reading of mass, or any bell for the *Ave Maria*: on the other hand one pretty lass after another disappeared from Lacco and Casamicciola, and nobody knew where they went, for they were never seen any more. One evening, while they were drinking and singing their merriest up there, a fearful storm came up over the sea in exactly the same quarter from which the holy brother had come. It rolled, a billowy sea of cloud, over the island, spread out over Lacco and struck the chapel, where, in remembrance of the holy brother, his boat was preserved. This and the chapel were burned. Next the tempest wrapped itself like a mantle about the summit of Epomeo, and towards midnight a ruddy light was seen up there, from which all knew that the convent was on fire. In the morning, when the storm had passed off, people went up to give help, but there was almost nothing left to save. The lightning had first struck the church, and afterwards the refectory, where all the brothers were assembled. Both buildings were burnt down, and of the convent there still stood only the cells which had been hollowed out in the mountain itself. The holy brother and seven of the monks had been struck dead by the lightning: many of the others had lost their speech, or were lame for life. From that day the convent fell more and more into decay; but during the same night the vineyard-watchers saw the first *monacello*, and since then they have spread themselves over the whole island."

Felicetto rose, but I drew him down again on the bench.

"Now tell me, Felicetto, how was it that you met the *monacello*?"

He opened his eyes wide with astonishment and asked: "How did you know of that, *signore*?"

"Assuredly," I replied, smiling, and led by a sort of association of ideas, "the *monacellos* down here and the

monacellos up there in your vineyard have something to do with each other. Tell me about it."

"Yes, that is a strange story, which I have never told to any one but my wife," said Felicetto, hesitating; "but if it interests you, *signore*, I will tell it you exactly as it happened to me. In the first times after I had carried off my wife from Naples things went right hard with us. The old folks would give us nothing at all, as indeed we had expected, and if one sets up housekeeping on nothing he is sure to have his fill of trouble at first. So one morning I had been down there in Lacco to sell a goat, the only one we owned at that time. Towards sundown, as I was about going home, I met Beppo, one of my former comrades, who had that day let asses to an English family, and had his pockets full of money. I don't know how it came about, but I fell to thinking that perhaps it would have been better if I had remained a donkey-driver, and to get rid of my thoughts I went with him to fat Giuseppe's, who then kept an inn. When we had drunk a couple of glasses it came over me that it was a great sin for me to sit there drinking up the money while my poor wife at home had hardly dry bread for herself and Annina, who was just born, and I felt so enraged with myself that I drank yet more to drown the voice of conscience. Soon after Beppo proposed a game of cards, as we both had money in our pockets, and I could not resist the temptation. I might perhaps win everything and go home with a new goat and money into the bargain. Just as we had begun our play there came in a little withered monk, whom I had never seen before. The landlord said he was from Naples. He took a place at our table and sat quite still looking on. When he had sipped a little of his wine he asked: 'Are you the Felicetto that ran away with Lorenzo's daughter?'

"'Yes,' I answered gruffly, for I had just lost.

"'That was cheeky,' said he, and snickered away to himself in a strange, silent fashion. I stared at him and he went on. 'And now you are playing here, and she is waiting for you with the child.'

"'Yes,' I answered angrily, for I lost again.

"'There's cheek for you,' said he, and snickered away again to himself as if it afforded him a great deal of satisfaction.

"I moved my chair so as to turn my back to him and went on with my game. But every time I lost I heard him snickering behind me and muttering, 'There was cheek, hee, hee : there was cheek!' I was furious at the luck, furious at myself, and furious at the monk. I had drawn my knife, and I committed a great sin, *signore*. I struck out at him with all my force, but the knife stuck fast in the empty chair. The monk, all said, had drunk up his wine and gone out more than half an hour before. I went out into the moonlit night, and as it was already late climbed up the path that leads into the Dead Valley. This way was somewhat shorter, yet in reality I was in no haste to get home. Not because she would scold me, *signore*, do not think that ; but because she would be so grieved and go about so still and sad, without ever smiling. That makes me feel like stifling : that I can't bear. So I fell to reckoning with myself, and I found I was a rascally fellow, that couldn't break off his old habits and had never deserved such a wife, who worked for him and drudged till her hair turned grey, for that is how it came to be grey, *signore*, so much earlier than it ought to have been. Suddenly I thought of the *monacello*, and it became clear to me that it had been he who had enticed me to play away all my money. All at once there came over me a strange dread of going through the Dead Valley, and yet on the other hand a great desire to do so : it seemed somehow as if I might there get hold of my money again. I thought

he would not take the knife-thrust very ill of me, because one certainly cannot harm a dead man by stabbing him. As I entered the valley—it was in the month of May—all was as bright and as clear as day. The black lava-blocks lay like coffins in a receiving tomb : I could recognise each hollow and each crevice in them, but the valley itself was so lonely and desolate that I almost started at my own shadow. All the while I had, as it were, an inward feeling that I must meet the *monacello*. I was, therefore, not particularly concerned when I heard something stir behind a mass of rock and saw a black shadow move under it. On the contrary, I walked directly towards it, and imagine my surprise when I became aware that it was my own goat which lay there, just as it did to-night. I was about to seize it but it ran away before me, and every time I thought I had it, it was just out of my reach. Suddenly it stood still before a cleft, gave a little spring, and was gone. I sprang down into the hollow to follow it, for the goat, at any rate, I was determined to have. But that was not so easy : the pass grew narrower and narrower, the rocky walls towered up higher and higher, and at last shut in so close above me that I felt the cold mountain-water fall in drops on my face. All at once it widened into a sort of chamber, and there stood the goat licking up the sparks from a forge, while the little, thin, dried-up monk blew the bellows.

"'Well, is it you, Felicetto?' said he : 'that is cheeky, hee, hee !'

"I thought I should have sunk into the earth with terror, for his cloak was bloody, and the blood was trickling from a wound in his breast.

"'You gave me a poke with the knife,' he laughed : 'that was cheeky ;' and then he grinned such an evil grin with his meagre sunken features that I was conscious of a wish to do it again. He went on blowing the bellows so that the sparks flew all about, and every time the goat sprang after

them and licked them up as if they had been green almonds. 'There's cheek, now, ain't there ?' grinned the monk. 'Take your goat, Felicetto, hee, hee, take your goat !'

"As he spoke he seized with his naked fingers a great lump of glowing gold that lay in the forge and threw it towards me.

"*'Jesu Maria !'* I cried, and crossed myself, and in an instant monk, goat, forge, and bellows had vanished, only the lump of gold still lay there, glistening in the moonlight. I stooped down and touched it carefully, but it was quite cold. So then I put it in my cap, and though it was heavy as a stone yet I bore it off with a light heart, so rich I had verily never been. When I got home I hid the lump under the bed. Restituta and the child were asleep. The next morning I waked up pretty late : Restituta was out in the vineyard at work. I hastened down to her and told her everything, but she shook her head and said I had been drunk. Now I was angry and sprang into the house to look under the bed. But, good heavens, how she laughed at my fright, when instead of the lump of gold I found a rotten melon in my hands—that was all that was left of the gift of the *monacello*. Full of anger and chagrin I seized the melon and buried it in the corner of the garden. Not till I knew it was under ground did I begin to have a feeling of security again. But Restituta embraced me and scolded me as gently as if I had been a child, and when I went into the stall there stood the goat as usual. My father-in-law had felt a touch of human sympathy in our need and had bought the goat in Lacco and sent it up here. From that day I drank no wine for a year, and have never again touched a card. Those were two things which I imposed on myself as punishment. But strange it was to see how from that morning everything grew bright and friendly about me. The vines had no disease, the olive-trees bore double, and I often

thought whether the *monacello* had not been one of the good sort and had a finger in all this. One day in the summer I went to the corner where I had buried the melon, and what a sight I saw there ! The whole ground was covered with great dark-green leaves, of which some shone like silver, and in the midst of them was a profusion of golden-yellow flowers, so that it was a pleasure to look at them. All this had burst forth out of the spot where I had buried the *monacello's* lump of gold. I called Restituta, and thought it would be best to tear the whole up and throw it away ; but she took delight in the beautiful leaves and advised me to wait and see what would become of it. In August the first fruits ripened, and it was marvellous how sweet and juicy they were. We showed them to many here on the island, but no one knew what they were, and so I took them to Naples. A gardener there knew them, but said they thrived nowhere else, except somewhere over in Africa, and it was remarkable that they had grown so large and juicy here. He bought them of me, and later took me to a fruit-dealer in Toledo Street, and now I easily sell all I can raise. So the *monacello's* lump of gold has, after all, made me an independent man."

"But why do you not plant the whole vineyard with these melons ?" I said : "that would pay better than wine-growing."

"That it would surely, and so I said to Restituta. But she answered she could not comprehend why I should wish to live in a melon-garden without flowers or shade. However, I made the attempt to plant a large piece with *monacellos*, but it turned out ill. They all withered, and not one set fruit. Many here on the island and in Naples have tried to grow them, but they always wither. Only up there with me in the warm ravine on the mountain-side, and only as far as I can lead the water of the little spring, do they succeed. The gardener in Naples laid out a melon-bed just after

the pattern of mine : he got fruits, too, but they hadn't the right taste."

"Yes, you are right," said I, smiling at his naïve belief, "the *monacello* has made you a man of substance."

"He and the Danes."

"The Danes ! How so ?" cried I in surprise.

"You see," he said in a low voice, as if he were now first betraying the secret that had become clear to me as soon as I set foot in his house, "I should never have risen out of my low position without my wife : she had first to furnish the money while I toiled and sweated to make the mountain-side productive. That, however, she would never have been able to do if she had not learned so much from the Danes. While we were not yet able to marry each other, she did as the young girls here on the island are wont to do, she went to Naples to take service and earn herself a little outfit. There she came first into the house of a Danish family, where she was received like a daughter, and learned much that later stood us in good stead. When these went away, she came into an English family, but in that there was a son—"

Felicetto was silent : I felt that here was a crisis.

"And then ?" I asked.

"I had friends in Lacco. One

evening we took a boat, and the next evening I had Restituta hid up there in one of the ravines, pretty near where now our house stands."

"But the old folks ?"

"They did not find us till after five days : then there was no help for it."

"And it turned out happily ?"

"Yes, *signore*," he said with emphasis, "assuredly that it has. They call us the Merry Family ; but that comes from our being happy. Haven't I everything that I can wish ? A home that I have made for myself, a good wife who never scolds, and joyous healthy children to inherit all that belongs to us ? Haven't we enough to do and enough to eat ? My children can marry when they like, and if the government lays on even another tax —well, we won't rebel on that account."

We rose and continued our way down the mountain-side, my companion still beguiling the way with his quaint tales. At length we reached the highway, and here, closing his last story in a hearty laugh, Felicetto left me with a parting wave of the hand. Long I stood and listened to his joyous song as it mounted higher and higher ; then, as the last tones died away, I turned and strolled homeward through the still moonlit night.



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